



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



THURSDAY — 21 JUL 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	07/21 Italy plunges into political turmoil
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italian-pm-draghi-meets-president-expected-resign-2022-07-21/

ROME, July 21 (Reuters) - Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi resigned on Thursday after his national unity government fell apart, setting the country on course for an early election and hitting financial markets.

Draghi, an unelected former central banker who has led a broad coalition for 18 months, tendered his resignation in a meeting with President Sergio Mattarella.

Mattarella's office said the head of state had "taken note" of the resignation and asked Draghi to remain in a caretaker capacity.

Mattarella plans to meet the speakers of both houses of parliament on Thursday afternoon. Political sources said earlier this week that he would likely dissolve parliament and call early an election in October.

A bloc of conservative parties, led by the far-right Brothers of Italy, looks likely to win a clear majority at the next election, a study of opinion polls showed this week.

Draghi's coalition crumbled on Wednesday when three of his main partners snubbed a confidence vote he had called to try to end divisions and renew their fractious alliance.

The political crisis has up-ended months of stability in Italy, during which Draghi had helped shape Europe's tough response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and had boosted the country's standing in financial markets.

Draghi drew warm applause from lawmakers when he made a brief appearance in the lower house of parliament on Thursday.

"Even central bankers have their hearts touched sometimes," he quipped as he received the ovation.

Italian bond and stocks sold off sharply just as markets were bracing for the first interest rate hike from the European Central Bank since 2011.

The Italian 10-year government bond briefly yield shot up more than 20 basis points to 3.7%, although the yield was some way off the 4%-plus levels seen in June.

"It is a big blow to Italy's ability to deliver policies and reforms over the near term," said Lorenzo Codogno, head of LC Macro Advisers and a former senior Italian Treasury official. "There will be delays and disruptions with early elections, and most likely no budget by year-end."

COALITION FRACTURES

Draghi had already tendered his resignation last week after one of his partners, the populist 5-Star Movement, failed to back him in a confidence vote on measures tackling the high cost of living.

Mattarella rejected the resignation and told him to go before parliament to see if he could keep the broad coalition going until the planned end of the legislature in early 2023.

In a speech to the Senate, Draghi had made a plea for unity and set out a series of issues facing Italy ranging from the war in Ukraine to social inequality and rising prices.

But the 5-Star once again decided not to back him, saying he had not addressed their core concerns. In addition, the rightist Forza Italia and League coalition parties decided to shun the vote, pushing for a government without 5-Star.

In a sign of the tensions brought to the surface by the end of the Draghi government, two ministers from Forza Italia said they would leave the centre-right party.

	Public administration minister Renato Brunetta and Mariastella Gelmini, minister for regional affairs, both quit the party led by Silvio Berlusconi.
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HEADLINE	07/21 ECB raises rates more than expected
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/ecb-finally-join-rate-hike-club-with-big-move-agenda-2022-07-20/
GIST	<p>FRANKFURT, July 21 (Reuters) - The European Central Bank raised interest rates by more than expected on Thursday, confirming that concerns about runaway inflation now trump growth considerations, even as the euro zone economy reels from the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine.</p> <p>The ECB raised its benchmark deposit rate by 50 basis points to zero percent, breaking its own guidance for a 25 basis point move as it joined global peers in jacking up borrowing costs. It was the euro zone central bank's first rate hike for 11 years.</p> <p>Ending an eight-year experiment with negative interest rates, the ECB also increased its main refinancing rate to 0.50% and promised further rate hikes possibly as soon as its next meeting on Sept. 8.</p> <p>"Further normalisation of interest rates will be appropriate," the ECB said. "The frontloading today of the exit from negative interest rates allows the Governing Council to make a transition to a meeting-by-meeting approach to interest rate decisions," the ECB said in a statement.</p> <p>The ECB had for weeks guided markets to expect a 25 basis point increase but sources close to the discussion said 50 basis points was put in play shortly before the meeting as indicators pointed to a further deterioration of the inflation outlook.</p> <p>With inflation already approaching double-digit territory, it is now at risk of getting entrenched above the ECB's 2% target and any gas shortage over the coming winter is likely to push prices even higher, perpetuating rapid price growth.</p> <p>Economists polled by Reuters had predicted a 25 basis point increase but most said the bank should actually hike by 50 basis points, lifting its record-low minus 0.5% deposit rate to zero.</p> <p>The euro, which fell to a two-decade low against the dollar earlier this month, firmed around a half a percent on the ECB's decision.</p> <p>The ECB also agreed to provide extra help to the 19-country currency bloc's more indebted nations, approving a new bond purchase scheme called Transmission Protection Instrument, intended to cap the rise in their borrowing costs and limit financial fragmentation.</p> <p>"The scale of TPI purchases depends on the severity of the risks facing policy transmission," the ECB said in a statement. "The TPI will ensure that the monetary policy stance is transmitted smoothly across all euro area countries."</p> <p>As ECB rates rise, borrowing costs increase disproportionately for countries like Italy, Spain or Portugal as investors demand a bigger premium to hold their debt.</p> <p>The ECB's commitment on Thursday comes as a political crisis in Italy is already weighing on markets following the resignation of Prime Minister Mario Draghi.</p> <p>The yield spread between Italian and German 10-year bonds briefly exceeded 240 basis points on Thursday and was not far from the 250 basis point level that triggered an emergency ECB policy meeting last month.</p> <p>Markets now turn to ECB President Christine Lagarde's 1245 GMT news conference.</p>

INFLATION VS RECESSION

The ECB's 50 basis point hike on Thursday still leaves it lagging its global peers, particularly the U.S. Federal Reserve, which lifted rates by 75 basis points last month and is likely to move by a similar margin in July.

But the euro zone is more exposed to the war in Ukraine and a threatened cut off in gas supplies from Russia could tip the bloc into recession, leaving policymakers with a dilemma of balancing growth and inflation considerations.

Confidence has already taken a hit from the war, and high raw materials prices are depleting purchasing power.

Raising borrowing costs in a downturn is controversial, however, and could magnify the pain for businesses and households.

But the ECB's ultimate mandate is controlling inflation, and rapid price growth for too long could perpetuate the problem as firms automatically adjust prices.

Europe's labour market is also increasingly tight, suggesting that pressure from wages is also likely to keep price growth high.

Some central banks, most particularly the Fed, have made clear they are willing to crash growth to control inflation because the risk of a new "inflation regime" setting in is too high.

And if a recession is coming, the ECB needs to front-load rate hikes so that its tightening cycle is finished sooner.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Probe: Huawei gear near missile silos
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-us-probes-chinas-huawei-over-equipment-near-missile-silos-2022-07-21/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, July 21 (Reuters) - The Biden administration is investigating Chinese telecoms equipment maker Huawei over concerns that U.S. cell towers fitted with its gear could capture sensitive information from military bases and missile silos that the company could then transmit to China, two people familiar with the matter said.</p> <p>Authorities are concerned Huawei (HWT.UL) could obtain sensitive data on military drills and the readiness status of bases and personnel via the equipment, one of the people said, requesting anonymity because the investigation is confidential and involves national security.</p> <p>The previously unreported probe was opened by the Commerce Department shortly after Joe Biden took office early last year, the sources said, following the implementation of rules to flesh out a May 2019 executive order that gave the agency the investigative authority.</p> <p>The agency subpoenaed Huawei in April 2021 to learn the company's policy on sharing data with foreign parties that its equipment could capture from cell phones, including messages and geolocation data, according to the 10-page document seen by Reuters.</p> <p>The Commerce Department said it could not "confirm or deny ongoing investigations." It added that: "protecting U.S. persons' safety and security against malign information collection is vital to protecting our economy and national security."</p> <p>Huawei did not respond to a request for comment. The company has strongly denied U.S. government allegations that it could spy on U.S. customers and poses a national security threat.</p>

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not respond to the specific allegations. In an emailed statement, it said: "The U.S. government abuses the concept of national security and state power to go all out to suppress Huawei and other Chinese telecommunications companies without providing any solid proof that they constitute a security threat to the U.S. and other countries."

Reuters could not determine what actions the agency might take against Huawei.

Eight current and former U.S. government officials said the probe reflects lingering national security concerns about the company, which was already hit with a slew of U.S. restrictions in recent years.

If the Commerce Department determines Huawei poses a national security threat, it could go beyond existing restrictions imposed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the U.S. telecoms regulator.

Using broad new powers created by the Trump administration, the agency could ban all U.S. transactions with Huawei, demanding U.S. telecoms carriers that still rely on its gear quickly remove it, or face fines or other penalties, a number of lawyers, academics and former officials interviewed by Reuters said.

The FCC declined to comment.

U.S.-CHINA TECH WAR

Huawei has long been dogged by U.S. government allegations it could spy on U.S. customers, though authorities in Washington have made little evidence public. The company denies the allegations.

"If Chinese companies like Huawei are given unfettered access to our telecommunications infrastructure, they could collect any of your information that traverses their devices or networks," FBI Director Christopher Wray warned in a speech in 2020. "Worse still: They'd have no choice but to hand it over to the Chinese government, if asked."

Reuters could not determine if Huawei's equipment is capable of collecting that sort of sensitive information and providing it to China.

"If you can stick a receiver on a (cellphone) tower, you can collect signals and that means you can get intelligence. No intelligence agency would pass an opportunity like that," said Jim Lewis, a technology and cybersecurity expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington D.C.-based think tank.

One move to address the perceived threat was a 2019 law and related rules forbidding U.S. companies from using federal subsidies to buy telecoms equipment from Huawei. It also tasked the FCC with compelling U.S. carriers that receive federal subsidies to purge their networks of Huawei equipment, in return for reimbursement.

But the so-called "rip and replace" deadline to remove and destroy Huawei equipment completely will not kick in until mid-2023 at the earliest, with additional opportunities for companies to seek extensions. And reimbursements will only reach 40% of the total requested for now.

TOWERS NEAR MISSILE SILOS

Cell towers equipped with Huawei gear that are close to sensitive military and intelligence sites have become a particular concern for U.S. authorities, according to the two sources and an FCC commissioner.

Brendan Carr, one of the FCC's five commissioners, said that cellphone towers around Montana's Malmstrom Air Force Base - one of three that oversee missile fields in the United States - ran on Huawei technology.

In an interview this week, he told Reuters there was a risk that data from smartphones obtained by Huawei could reveal troop movements near the sites: "There's a very real concern that some of that technology could be used as an early warning system if there happened to be, God forbid, an ICBM missile strike."

Reuters was unable to determine the exact location or scope of Huawei equipment operating near military facilities. Individuals interviewed by Reuters pointed to at least two other likely cases in Nebraska and Wyoming.

Crystal Rhoades, a commissioner at Nebraska's telecoms regulator, has flagged to media the risk posed by the proximity of cell towers owned by Viaero to intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) silos in the western part of the state.

ICBMs carry nuclear warheads to targets thousands of miles away and are stored in underground silos near military bases. The Nebraska cell towers are near a missile field overseen by F.E. Warren Air Force Base in neighboring Wyoming.

Viaero provides mobile telephone and wireless broadband services to about 110,000 customers in the region. It said in a 2018 filing to the FCC opposing the commission's efforts at curbing Huawei's expansion that approximately 80% of its equipment was manufactured by the Chinese firm.

That gear could potentially enable Huawei to glean sensitive information about the sites, Rhoades told Reuters in June.

"An enemy state could potentially see when things are online, when things are offline, the level of security, how many people are on duty in any given building where there are really dangerous and sophisticated weapons," Rhoades said.

Rhoades said in July that she had not been updated on rip and replace efforts by Viaero in more than two years, despite requesting updated information from the company in recent weeks.

At the time of last contact, the company said it would not begin removal efforts until the FCC money became available.

The FCC advised companies on Monday how much of their funding requests it can reimburse.

Viaero did not respond to multiple requests for comment. Huawei also declined to comment.

In Wyoming, then CEO of rural carrier Union Wireless, John Woody, said in a 2018 interview with Reuters that the company's coverage area included ICBM silos near the F.E. Warren Air Force Base and that its equipment included Huawei switches, routers and cell sites.

Last month, Eric Woody, John's son and acting CEO, said "virtually all the Huawei gear Union purchased remains in our network." He declined to say whether the towers close to the sensitive military sites contain Huawei equipment.

F.E. Warren Air Force Base referred comment on the Huawei equipment to the Pentagon. The United States Strategic Command, which is responsible for nuclear operations, said in a statement to Reuters: "We maintain constant awareness of activities near our installations and sites." It noted that "any concerns are on a whole of government level" but declined to provide further details on what those concerns are.

NEW POWERS AGAINST FOREIGN ADVERSARIES

Rick Sofield, a former DOJ official in the national security division who reviewed telecoms transactions, said the Commerce Department probe could give additional bite to the FCC's crackdown but there was nothing new in targeting Huawei.

"The U.S. government's concerns regarding Huawei are widely known so any information or communications technology company that continues to use Huawei products is assuming the risk that the U.S. government will come knocking," said Sofield, who represents U.S. and foreign companies facing U.S. national security reviews. He said he has not worked for Huawei.

The Commerce Department is using authority granted in 2019 that allows it to ban or restrict transactions between U.S. firms and internet, telecom and tech companies from "foreign adversary" nations including Russia and China, according to the executive order and related rules.

The two sources familiar with the Huawei investigation and a former government official said Huawei was one of the Biden administration's first cases using the new powers, referred to Commerce in early 2021 by the Justice Department.

The Justice Department referred requests for comment by Reuters to Commerce.

The subpoena is dated April 13, 2021, the same day that Commerce announced a document request was sent to an unnamed Chinese company under the new powers.

It gives Huawei 30 days to provide seven years' worth of "records identifying Huawei's business transactions and relationships with foreign entities located outside of the United States, including foreign government agencies or parties, that have access to, or that share in any capacity, U.S. user data collected by Huawei."

Noting that the "focus of this investigation is the provisioning of mobile network and telecommunications equipment...by Huawei in the United States," it also asks Huawei for a complete catalog of "all types of equipment sold" to "any communications provider in the United States," including names and locations of the parties to the sale.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Jobless claims highest level in 8mo.
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/inflation-unemployment-jobless-claims-a8abc1cac0563313cb0355e6c82f1c9c
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits last week rose to the highest level in more than eight months in what may be a sign that the labor market may be weakening.</p> <p>Applications for jobless aid for the week ending July 16 rose by 7,000 to 251,000, up from the previous week's 244,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's the most since Nov. 13, 2021 when 265,000 Americans applied for benefits.</p> <p>Analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet expected the number to come in at 242,000.</p> <p>First-time applications generally reflect layoffs.</p> <p>The four-week average for claims, which smooths out some of the week-to-week volatility, rose by 4,500 from the previous week, to 240,500.</p> <p>The total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits for the week ending July 9 rose by 51,000 from the previous week, to 1,384,000. That figure has been near 50-year lows for months.</p> <p>Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that employers added 372,000 jobs in June, a surprisingly robust gain and similar to the pace of the previous two months. Economists had expected job growth to slow sharply last month given the broader signs of economic weakness.</p> <p>The unemployment rate remained 3.6% for a fourth straight month, matching a near-50-year low that was reached before the pandemic struck in early 2020.</p>

	<p>The government also reported earlier in July that U.S. employers advertised fewer jobs in May amid signs that the economy is weakening, though the overall demand for workers remained strong. There are nearly two job openings for every unemployed person.</p> <p>Consumer prices are still soaring, up 9.1% in June compared with a year earlier, the biggest yearly increase since 1981, the government reported last week.</p> <p>The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits last week hit its highest level in nearly 8 months, but the total number of those collecting benefits fell. The Labor Department also reported last week that inflation at the wholesale level climbed 11.3% in June from a year earlier.</p> <p>All of those figures paint a divergent picture of the post-pandemic economy: Inflation is hammering household budgets, forcing consumers to pull back on spending, and growth is weakening, heightening fears the economy could fall into recession.</p> <p>In an effort to combat the worst inflation in more than four decades, the Federal Reserve raised rates by a half-point in May and another rare three-quarter point increase last month. Most economists expect the Federal Reserve to jack up its borrowing rate another half-to-three-quarters of a point when it meets later this month.</p> <p>Though the labor market is still strong, there have been some high-profile layoffs announced recently by Tesla, Netflix, Carvana, Redfin and Coinbase.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Europe wildfire threat recedes, lower temps
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/wildfires-fires-climate-and-environment-34fcda590bef1976ee12cd18d48f1d2f
GIST	<p>MADRID (AP) — Europe’s spate of fierce wildfires abated somewhat Thursday amid cooler temperatures, with French firefighters starting to get the upper hand over two major blazes, Spain taming a fire that killed two people and no new outbreaks reported in Portugal.</p> <p>But a fire in Slovenia on the border with Italy kicked up strongly Thursday, forcing the evacuation of three villages.</p> <p>Spanish firefighters were tackling nine blazes, with two said to be especially dangerous in the northwestern Galicia region. Some of the 11,000 people evacuated because of the fires in Spain began returning home, and a major highway in the northwestern Zamora province reopened after two days.</p> <p>Temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and a drought have worsened Spain’s wildfires this year. Thursday’s highest temperature in Spain was forecast to be 32 C (90 F).</p> <p>In France, more than a week of round-the-clock battling against ferocious flames by more than 2,000 firefighters and up to 10 water-dropping planes was slowly winning out against two major wildfires in the tinder-dry pine forests in southwestern France.</p> <p>The Gironde region’s fire service said both blazes, which had forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people, were contained.</p> <p>Although firefighters in France were still tamping down hot spots that could reignite blazes, the fire service said it expects to have tamed the fires’ embers within days. Officials said they will probably be able to declare the fires completely extinguished within weeks.</p> <p>Officials in Slovenia, meanwhile, said the raging blaze in the southwestern Kras region was the biggest since the country became an independent nation in 1991.</p>

	<p>“The fire is nowhere near its end,” Srecko Sestan, head of Slovenia’s civil protection service, told the official STA news agency.</p> <p>The fire has engulfed 2,000 hectares (nearly 5,000 acres) and set off unexploded ordnance left over from World War I. More than 1,000 firefighters have been fighting the blaze, aided by the Slovenian army and police, as well as helicopters from Austria, Slovakia and Croatia.</p> <p>In Bosnia, a days-long fire in the southern Blidinje nature park prompted authorities to declare a natural disaster because of the danger it posed to a protected conservation area.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Europe summer travel chaos: extreme heat
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/21/ukraine-russia-war-putin-fighters/
GIST	<p>Remember the days when the biggest concern about a summer trip to Europe was who might be on strike?</p> <p>A brutal heat wave in Western Europe this week produced Britain’s hottest day on record, warping a runway at London’s Luton Airport and affecting the availability of train travel. Portugal reported over 1,000 deaths related to extreme weather. Passengers on a train that was stopped in the Galicia region of Spain were alarmed to see wildfires out their windows on both sides of the car. Some beaches in France and Spain were closed as the fires encroached.</p> <p>Now Central Europe is bracing for more temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.</p> <p>Travelers to the continent can tack on climate disasters to a list of 2022 obstacles that include the evolving coronavirus, canceled flights, lost luggage, insane ticket prices, huge crowds and — yes — labor strikes.</p> <p>Ross Caldwell Thompson, chief executive of Covac Global, said his medical evacuation company has been getting “numerous” calls from people wanting to know about the service because they are concerned that the heat in Europe will exacerbate a preexisting condition.</p> <p>But, he said, they are still traveling.</p> <p>Kristy Osborn, who owns the Travel Leaders agency in Loveland, Colo., said pent-up demand has led to more clients traveling in four weeks this past month than in a typical five-month period. Greece and Italy have been especially popular, she said.</p> <p>“The desire to travel to Europe this summer goes far beyond the inconveniences,” said Simone Amorico, chief executive of Access Italy, based in Holmes Beach, Fla.</p> <p>Airports in London and Amsterdam are so overwhelmed that they capped the number of daily passengers, wiping out thousands of flights from summer schedules and probably leading to more cancellations.</p> <p>Passengers trying to rebook may be met with extraordinarily long hold times and limited options, because the travel industry hasn’t made it back to pre-pandemic staffing levels. Even when a flight keeps its schedule, there is no guarantee that passengers’ luggage will go with it.</p> <p>Freda Moon, a travel editor with SFGATE, tweeted about her family’s luggage being lost for three weeks, resulting in them landing back in San Francisco with no child car seats to get the kids home from the airport.</p> <p>Heather Ostberg Johnson of Fort Collins, Colo., leaves this week for a two-week working vacation in the London area. She planned the trip this spring after being accepted into a competitive theater intensive.</p> <p>The timing felt right a few months ago, she said. The plane tickets were expensive, but her young son can still fly free. They had been vaccinated and boosted, and all had recently recovered from covid-19.</p>

	<p>“I think we felt a little invincible,” Johnson said. “It kind of felt like it’s not going to get any better than this.”</p> <p>Now, when she looks at travel problems in Europe, “it all feels like it’s imploding,” she said.</p> <p>Because Johnson didn’t plan this vacation to see major tourist sites or museums, she said she won’t feel deprived skipping the crowded attractions. She plans to focus on her classes and take her son to playgrounds and gardens.</p> <p>“I feel that we can pivot as we need to” around the weather and travel disruptions, she said.</p> <p>“I think we’ll be okay,” she said. “We’ll just take a lot of cold showers, and sit in front of our friends’ swamp cooler and be with them.”</p> <p>She’s not the only one with a general level of acceptance. Osborn said the only thing her travel agency’s clients have complained about is the heat, and they face that domestically.</p> <p>Temperatures have climbed as high as 115 degrees in Texas and Oklahoma, and 28 states have issued heat advisories. Denver broke a 144-year record for warmest low temperature (72 degrees) on Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Britain freakish heat demolished records
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/20/uk-extreme-heat-records-europe/
GIST	<p>The maximum temperature reached Tuesday in Coningsby, England — 130 miles north of London — was unlike anything the village had ever observed. It was an outlier in the truest sense: about 9 degrees Fahrenheit (5 degrees Celsius) above the previous highest temperature.</p> <p>That high temperature, 104.5 degrees (40.3 Celsius), shattered the national temperature record for Britain by a lofty 2.9 degrees (1.6 Celsius).</p> <p>Ordinarily, when temperature records are broken during heat waves, they do so in a few places and by fractional degrees. But on Tuesday, records in the United Kingdom toppled over a vast area and by enormous margins.</p> <p>The magnitude and extent of Tuesday’s temperatures underscored the exceptional nature of this extreme event — which scientists say would have been impossible without a boost from human-caused climate change.</p> <p>The most impressive records set</p> <p>As Coningsby set the national temperature record for England and the United Kingdom, all-time highs were also set in Scotland and Wales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hawarden, Wales, hit 98.8 degrees (37.1 Celsius) • Floors Castle, Scotland, hit 95.2 degrees (35.1 Celsius) <p>England, Wales and Scotland also established their highest minimum (nighttime) temperatures ever recorded. At London’s Kenley Airport, the record-setting low was a tropical 78.4 degrees (25.8 Celsius).</p> <p>At least 34 locations in the U.K. set new all-time records, the U.K. Met Office reported, five of them exceeding 40 Celsius (104 degrees).</p> <p>Numbers and charts help tell the story of the scorching heat, and many shared by experts and climate scientists during the record day illustrate how remarkable it was...</p>

As the United Kingdom has maintained temperature records over a longer period than any country in the world, Ed Hawkins, a climate scientist at the University of Reading, plotted temperatures averaged over Central England from 1772 to present. Tuesday sticks out like a sore thumb...

Just how out of whack were London's temperature Tuesday? Robert Rohde, a climate scientist at Berkeley Earth, prepared the chart below, showing Tuesday's 104.4 degrees (40.2 Celsius) far, far off the normal distribution...

It was not only exceedingly hot where people live, but also at high altitudes.

In a tweet, atmospheric scientist Philippe Papin showed that temperatures a mile up were about four standard deviations from the norm over a vast area of the United Kingdom, meaning it had about a 0.1 percent chance of happening...

While the U.K. was home to the most widespread records amid this European heat wave, Wednesday produced more remarkable heat in other spots across the continent...

As scores of all-time heat records were set in Germany on Wednesday, Hamburg crossed the 40 Celsius (104-degree) threshold for the first time ever observed — the location farthest north in the country to do so on record. Hamburg (53.5 North latitude) is even farther north than London (51.5 degrees North) and at about the same latitude as Edmonton, Canada.

What made it so hot?

The heat originated from a sprawling zone of high pressure known as a heat dome. It spread historically high temperatures over the [Iberian Peninsula](#) late last week before shifting into [Germany and Denmark on Wednesday](#). Underneath these heat domes, the air sinks, clearing out cloud cover while allowing the sun to beat down relentlessly.

The high-pressure zone ballooned unusually far north into Europe due to a low-pressure system west of Portugal, whose circulation pumped in hot air from northern Africa.

The high-pressure zone that formed the heat dome was part of a sequence of seven alternating high- and low-pressure systems circling the northern hemisphere — known as a wave train or, more specifically, a “wavenumber-7 pattern.” The pattern is known for supporting intense and persistent heat waves.

The presence of so many waves set up an atmospheric traffic jam of sorts, slowing down the flow of these systems, allowing heat to build. Other heat waves were simultaneously affecting the central United States and central Asia.

[Research published](#) by Michael Mann, a climate professor at Penn State University, and colleagues links an increase in such patterns to human-caused warming of the Arctic. In an email, Mann confirmed the presence of such a pattern this week.

How this compares with the past

The U.K. has endured brutal heat waves in the past, some more prolonged than this year's, but none have been nearly as intense.

The hottest summer on record in the U.K. occurred in 1976, with heat so extreme it has remained entrenched in the national psyche. The U.K. saw [15 consecutive days of temperatures above 90 degrees \(32 Celsius\)](#). [Mortality rose 20 percent above baseline levels](#). But the maximum temperature was a mere 96.6 degrees (35.9 Celsius).

The infamous 2003 heat wave, [blamed for 70,000 deaths](#) in western and central Europe, saw the mercury soar to 101.3 degrees (38.5 Celsius) in the U.K., a record at the time. But it was surpassed 16 years later by the 2019 heat wave, which saw the mercury reach 101.7 (38.7 Celsius) in Cambridge. The most recent heat wave toppled that with ease.

HEADLINE	07/20 First: Alaska Airlines electronic bag tags
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2022/07/20/electric-bag-tags-alaska-airlines/
GIST	<p>Alaska Airlines is launching an electronic bag-tag program it describes as the first of its kind in the United States.</p> <p>The technology, which the company announced Tuesday, will allow customers to register their luggage with the airline before they get to the airport and transfer their flight information to the tags through an app on their phones.</p> <p>“Guests will be able to tag their bags in just seconds and complete the entire check-in process almost all from home,” Charu Jain, senior vice president of merchandising and innovation, said in a statement.</p> <p>An initial rollout for the tags in “late 2022” will include 2,500 of its frequent fliers, Alaska Airlines said. Mileage Plan members will be able to buy the electronic tags, which will replace paper tags printed at the check-in counter.</p> <p>Travelers will be able to activate the tagging devices remotely up to 24 hours before their upcoming flight takes off. Alaska Airlines expects that this program will reduce the time that travelers spend dropping off their checked luggage at the airport by nearly 40 percent.</p> <p>This is the airline’s latest announcement in a line of experiments with luggage and traveling. In March, Alaska Airlines launched a self-bag drop system at the San Jose International Airport that allows travelers to scan their boarding passes, print their own bag tag and drop off bags to be loaded onto airplanes.</p> <p>Earlier this year, Alaska also began experimenting with a subscription model called Flight Pass that allows customers to take at least six round-trip flights a year on select West Coast routes for a flat monthly fee.</p> <p>The electronic bag tag announcement comes during a time marked by travel chaos. Airlines facing labor shortages and high demand for travel have frustrated customers with lost or delayed luggage.</p> <p>Airlines mishandled baggage at a much higher rate in April 2022 than they did in April 2021, when fewer people were flying, according to Department of Transportation data.</p> <p>In April 2022, airlines mishandled nearly 220,000 of the 40 million bags they dealt with, according to a DOT report.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Northwest vaccines for young kids scarce
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/07/covid-vaccines-young-kids-are-scarce-much-northwest
GIST	<p>Some local parents are saying they’ve had trouble getting pediatric COVID-19 vaccinations for their young children, despite the FDA’s approval of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines for children as young as 6 months in June.</p> <p>Janna Privette, a Kooskia, Idaho, resident, has two children under age 3. She was only the second parent at her pediatrician’s office to request the vaccine, she said.</p> <p>“The earliest we could get it is next week. They’re only offering Pfizer, we didn’t really have a choice between Moderna and Pfizer,” Privette said.</p> <p>Her own doctor’s shipment of the pediatric vaccine ended up conflicting with travel plans, she said, and no one else she could find locally had it. Eventually, she found a clinic in Montana to get her children their first dose while visiting family.</p>

“I called around to a bunch of different places to see if we could, you know, get it and they all said, ‘No, we’re not getting it. We don’t have it yet,’” Privette said.

Privette was hoping to have her daughter, who starts preschool in the fall, fully vaccinated by the time classes begin. That won’t happen because of how long it took to schedule, she said.

“She starts preschool in early September, and with Pfizer, you know, if we had started it right when it became available, I think we would have just made it. But with having to wait several more weeks, she wouldn’t be fully vaccinated until about a month into the school year.”

Anne Pisor, a Pullman resident, has a 21-month-old daughter. She called seven different vaccine providers shortly after the approval for children 6 months and older, trying to find somewhere to take her daughter.

Many pharmacies weren’t offering the vaccine for children under 5, while others required patients to have established care, she said.

Eventually, Pisor was able to get on a waitlist at her family doctor’s office, though the last she heard the vaccines are on backorder, she said.

As cases climb again, Pisor said she’s anxious to get her daughter vaccinated as soon as possible. Both she and her husband work full time, meaning she has to rely on day care.

“The WSU Children’s Center — they’re really great, but WSU can’t require anyone to mask. And so what that means is that there’s a mix of folks at the Children’s Center who are masked and unmasked. And so what that means is that whether or not our daughter gets COVID really isn’t under our control.”

Although most young children will not suffer serious illness because of COVID-19, Pisor said she wants to avoid any potential for harm to her daughter or those in contact with her.

“She could transmit it to other people, which is one issue,” Pisor said. “Another issue is that she could get long COVID. And we still just don’t know what that means to have long COVID, what the long-term health implications are.”

Some of the limited access may be due in part to less demand for the vaccine than anticipated, said Chris Skidmore, director of Whitman County Public Health.

“I think it’s about half (the demand) of what they were thinking that they were going to get,” he said. “But in terms of numbers, I don’t really have that.”

Privette said one clinic she talked to had a waiting list, but wouldn’t schedule until they had at least 10 children on it, which would guarantee a full 10-dose shipment could be used.

“I know a lot of parents are waiting to kind of see how things turn out. But I think — if other parents are ready to vaccinate their kids, reach out to your provider and let them know that you’re ready. Because I think that’ll open up access to everybody more quickly.”

Carol Moehrle, director for Public Health — Idaho North Central District, said parents who are on the fence about whether to vaccinate their children can access information through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Some, she said, may be holding off because the number of young children who’ve contracted the virus is relatively low.

“In our whole district for the last two and a half years, the number of zero to four (year olds) has been about 390 (reported cases),” Moehrle said.

Idaho residents who do want to vaccinate their babies should reach out to their family practitioner or pediatric office as a first step if possible, she said.

“If those babies, those families have a practitioner or provider that they’ve seen for newborn care or childhood care, that’s where I would start with looking for vaccine,” Moehrle said. “They’re being very, very diligent in making sure they have what their families need.”

Some Idaho providers, including Gritman, CHAS Clinics in Lewiston and Moscow, Clearwater Valley Health, St. Mary’s Health, and Syringa clinics offer or will soon offer pediatric vaccines, she said, though not all of them currently provide the vaccine to children under 5.

In Pullman, Sid’s Pharmacy is offering both Moderna and Pfizer vaccines for children as young as 6 months, and patients can schedule on their website.

Pullman Family Medicine will also offer the first doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for children under 5 years old from 9-11:30 a.m. on July 20, 22, 26 and 29. New and established patients at Pullman Family Medicine can call (509) 332-3548 to schedule. No walk-ins will be accepted.

The SEL clinic also offers COVID-19 vaccines for children under 5, but only for family members of employees.

Palouse Pediatrics also offers vaccines for children under 5 years, but only for established patients.

In Moscow, Gritman Medical Center is finalizing details for pediatric COVID-19 vaccination clinics through the Gritman system, said hospital spokesperson Brad Gary.

They will soon be offering vaccines for children 6 months to 5 years of age for any patients with established care at any of their clinics in Moscow, Potlatch, Kendrick or Troy, and will be reaching out to families soon to assist with scheduling.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Seattle struggles with ‘reinventing’ policing
SOURCE	https://www.bigcountrynewsconnection.com/news/state/washington/seattle-struggles-with-reinventing-policing-as-crime-soars/article_e7f21549-154c-53ab-ac37-2597b704969d.html
GIST	<p>(The Center Square) – Seattle has been in the process of "reinventing" its police department over the last few years as crime has been on the rise. Critics argue that the two trends are firmly related.</p> <p>According to city data, crime increased in 2021 and 9-1-1 response times are at historic lows. The city has scaled back the budget for law enforcement and moved many functions out of the police department.</p> <p>“The violent crime rate reached a 14-year high in 2021,” the Seattle Police Department stated in its 2021 final crime report.</p> <p>“What you are seeing in Seattle is disaster. This is pure disaster. Crime is out of control in Seattle,” Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich said in an email to The Center Square. “They cannot keep personnel. It’s been a really bad thing for the citizens.”</p> <p>The 2021 budget eliminated 167 full-time positions within the police department, a 7.6% reduction over 2020.</p> <p>The 2021 budget proposal stated, "the 2021 Proposed Budget for the Seattle Police Department outlines a solid first step in reinventing policing and reimagining community safety. The budget reduces the size of SPD’s sworn force, [and] transfers functions from SPD that are better performed in a more civilianized practice."</p>

That budget brought SPD's officer count to a 30-year low with less than 1,000 officers in the department.

Departures helped too as 109 officers left the department so far this year alone, according to SPD Chief Adrian Diaz.

The bleeding of personnel has caused Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell to reverse aspects of this experiment when he announced a \$2 million plan to recruit and retain officers within SPD.

Complicating all of this is the fact the city council, in its own words, has cast policing itself in a negative racial light.

The 2021 budget stated that "there are many contributing factors that lead to racial disproportionality in the criminal legal system. These include the Seattle Police Department's arrest decisions and the Seattle City Attorney's decisions on what cases to prosecute. The Court acknowledges disproportionality exists and is committed to reducing disproportionality in how it works with and affects individuals . . . Communities are not only protesting race based disparities in interactions with SPD, but the systemic racism built into government."

Non-traffic criminal filings were at a historic low in 2021. According to [city stats](#), the number of filings in 2021 were 3,989. That was a drop from 6,044 in 2020.

As part of reinventing policing in Seattle, SPD moved functions to different departments. The Seattle Emergency Communications Center, which consists almost entirely of civilian staff members, are now responsible for receiving incoming communications, triaging calls and dispatching sworn and civilian officers, such as parking enforcement officers, as needed.

The Office of Emergency Management is now responsible for coordinating the city's efforts to prepare for and respond to natural disasters and emergencies that Seattle may experience.

And the Seattle Department of Transportation is now responsible for parking enforcement within the city. This turned into an issue because a misstep by the city in turning over the responsibilities from SPD to SDOT caused parking enforcement officers to not have special police commissions at the time of issuance, according to the city.

That mistake meant Seattle had to give \$5 million in refunds for parking tickets issued from Sept. 1 2021 through April 5 2022, at the same time as the city faces a budget deficit of \$117 million.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Sri Lanka braces for more unrest, turmoil
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/21/sri-lanka-unrest-new-president-crackdown-protests
GIST	<p>Sri Lanka was braced for more unrest after newly appointed president, Ranil Wickremesinghe, vowed to crack down on the protests that toppled his predecessor, condemning them as "against the law".</p> <p>Speaking after being MPs picked him as successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Wickremesinghe made it clear he would not tolerate those he perceived to be stirring up violence.</p> <p>"If you try to topple the government, occupy the president's office and the prime minister's office, that is not democracy; it is against the law," he said.</p> <p>"We will deal with them firmly according to the law. We will not allow a minority of protesters to suppress the aspirations of the silent majority clamouring for a change in the political system."</p>

Wickremesinghe, 73, was sworn in as the eighth president of Sri Lanka at a small ceremony on Thursday morning. He took his oath of office before chief justice Jayantha Jayasuriya at the tightly guarded parliament complex in Colombo, a statement from his office said.

Sri Lanka's police chief and top military brass stood behind the new president as the oath was administered in the presence of parliamentary speaker Mahinda Abeywardana. Among the MPs who gathered afterwards to congratulate him was the former president and prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is the older brother of Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Wickremesinghe was expected to name the leader of the parliament and old schoolmate Dinesh Gunawardena as prime minister. Gunawardena is known as a strong Rajapaksa loyalist, and served as a cabinet minister when Mahinda Rajapaksa was president, and then again when Gotabaya Rajapaksa was president.

In recent days, Wickremesinghe, who declared a state of emergency this week, had made statements calling protesters "fascists" and indicating he would not be afraid to crack down on the demonstrations.

Less than an hour after he was declared president on Wednesday, a court order was issued prohibiting anyone from congregating within a 50-metre radius of a statue that stands at Galle Face in Colombo, where protesters spurred by the country's economic collapse have been camped out for months.

However, people defied the order and dozens gathered on the steps of the president's offices, which are still occupied by the protest movement, to shout rallying cries of "deal Ranil" – a reference to Wickremesinghe's reputation as a scheming politician – as well as "Ranil bank robber", referring to a bank bond scam he was implicated in. Hundreds of police and military stood on the periphery but did not interfere in the rally.

After being selected by MPs as president, Wickremesinghe called on the opposition parties for an "end to division" and said he wanted to "bring everyone together so that a national consensus is formed as to the way forward".

But questions remain over whether Wickremesinghe would be able to put together a cross-party unity government acceptable to the people, after the major opposition parties had pledged their support for the presidential candidate he defeated.

Wickremesinghe has been prime minister six times and is close to the Rajapaksa family. Protesters fear that he will protect the Rajapaksas from being held accountable, as he has been accused of doing in the past, and would not instigate the constitutional change being demanded by the protest movement, including an end to the system of executive presidency.

Wickremesinghe is due to serve for the rest of Rajapaksa's term, until November 2024.

"Ranil will be chased away, he is a crook and he doesn't have a mandate," said Anura Goonaratna, 53, a toy exporter. "This protest movement is going to get worse. There has to be an end to this and the only ending we will accept is throwing Ranil out, whatever it takes."

With recriminations swirling in Sri Lanka about the country's implosion, the head of the CIA weighed into the debate on Wednesday by blaming "dumb bets" on high-debt Chinese investment.

Speaking at the Aspen security forum in Colorado, America's spy chief Bill Burns said: "The Chinese have a lot of weight to throw around and they can make a very appealing case for their investments."

But he said nations should look at "a place like Sri Lanka today – heavily indebted to China – which has made some really dumb bets about their economic future and are suffering pretty catastrophic, both economic and political, consequences as a result."

	<p>“That, I think, ought to be an object lesson to a lot of other players – not just in the Middle East or South Asia, but around the world – about having your eyes wide open about those kinds of dealings.”</p> <p>China has invested heavily in Sri Lanka – strategically located in the Indian Ocean and off India, often seen as a rival of Beijing – and worked closely with former president Rajapaksa.</p> <p>However, analysts have disputed the China debt-trap narrative in Sri Lanka. China only accounts for 10% of Sri Lanka’s debts, most of which were concessionary loans and the repayments only accounted for less than 5% of the country’s annual foreign debt servicing.</p> <p>A much greater drain on the country’s foreign exchange reserves were international sovereign bonds, much of which are from the US, which were borrowed by the country at high interest rates. It was these bond repayments – which were due to total over \$1.5bn in 2022 – that drained Sri Lanka’s reserves and ultimately forced them to default in May, as the country was virtually bankrupt.</p> <p>Rajapaksa fled the country and resigned last week in the face of mass protests over dire economic conditions, with the island nearly exhausting its supply of food and fuel as it no longer has foreign currency to pay for crucial imports.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Day 148 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/21/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-148-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia’s foreign minister has said Moscow’s military “tasks” now go beyond the eastern Donbas region to permanently occupy broad swaths of southern Ukraine. Sergei Lavrov said Russia may seek more territory along the frontlines in Ukraine, calling it a buffer against US-supplied Himars rocket artillery. “Now the geography is different,” Lavrov said. “It’s not just Donetsk and Luhansk, it’s Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and a number of other territories.” • Russia has shut down the idea of resuming peace talks with Ukraine, accusing it of being undeserving of “serious attention from serious people”. Lavrov said the previous sit-down proved Ukraine had no “desire to discuss anything in earnest”. He continued: “They simply will never be able to articulate anything that would deserve the serious attention of serious people.” “[Peace talks] don’t make any sense in the current situation.” • Russian missile strikes in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv killed three people on Wednesday, according to local officials. Regional governor Oleh Synehubov said those killed included a man, a woman and a 13-year-old boy as he waited at a bus stop. • Ukrainian shelling badly damaged the crucial Antonivskiy bridge in the Russia-controlled Kherson region of southern Ukraine, Moscow-installed regional authorities said. The bridge is one of only two crossing points for Russian forces to territory they have occupied on the western bank of the Dnieper river in southern Ukraine. It has been a key target for Ukrainian forces in recent days. • The Ukrainian first lady, Olena Zelenska, appealed to US lawmakers to provide more weapons to fight “Russia’s Hunger Games” in an emotional 15-minute speech to members of the House and Senate. “I am asking for weapons, weapons that would not be used to wage a war on somebody else’s land, but to protect one’s home and the right to wake up alive in that home,” she said, adding that US weapons could help assure a “joint great victory”. • The US will provide four more advanced precision Himars rocket systems to Ukraine, the defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, has announced. “Ukraine needs the firepower and the ammunition to withstand this [Russian] barrage and to strike back,” he said. In addition, the US will provide additional guided multiple launch rocket system (GMLRS) ammunition, which can precisely strike targets up to 80km (50 miles) away. • The European Union will mobilise a fifth tranche of military assistance of €500m to further support Ukraine. The EU foreign affairs chief, Josep Borrell, said the region “remains focused and steadfast in its support for Ukraine, together with partners”.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lithuania will offer Ukraine additional military support, the Lithuanian ministry of defence announced on Wednesday. Included in the package will be M13 and M577 armoured personnel carriers, as well as ammunition for reserve training. • The European Union has set out emergency plans to reduce its gas use amid fears Russia could cut off its supply in winter. It proposed a voluntary target for countries to restrict usage by 15% from August until March, accusing the Kremlin of weaponising gas exports. “Russia is blackmailing us. Russia is using energy as a weapon,” the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said in a news conference. • South America’s Mercosur trade bloc has declined Zelenskiy’s request to address its upcoming summit. Bloc members Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay failed to reach an agreement on the request which he made to Paraguay last week, according to the deputy foreign relations minister Raul Cano, who declined to say which states were against it. • The European Union has agreed on a new round of sanctions against Russia, this time targeting its gold exports, as well as individuals and entities. The move marks the seventh package of penalties and will see assets frozen at Russia’s largest bank, Sberbank, with several more names added to the blacklist. • Pro-Russian separatist forces have stepped up the forced conscription of men in the occupied areas of Donbas. Video emerged of a Ukrainian woman confronting officials who attempted to force her husband to join pro-Russian fighters in Donetsk. “He doesn’t want to go and fight. Nobody wants to fight. We are so sick of you and your war,” she said. • Russia’s communications watchdog has said it is taking steps against the Wikimedia Foundation, which hosts online encyclopedia Wikipedia, for violating Russian laws. The laws are aimed at restricting truthful reporting around the conflict in Ukraine.
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HEADLINE	07/20 Day 147 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/20/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-147-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, won the endorsement of the Iranian supreme leader for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine during a visit to Tehran on Tuesday. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Putin: “War is a harsh and difficult issue, and Iran is not at all pleased that ordinary people suffer from it, but in the case of Ukraine if you had not taken the initiative, the other side would have caused the war with its own initiative ... If the road is open to Nato, it knows no boundaries and if it was not stopped in Ukraine they would start the same war some time later under the pretext of Crimea.” • Khamenei added that Tehran and Moscow needed to stay vigilant against “western deception”, calling for long-term cooperation between Iran and Russia. “Iran and Russia’s long-term cooperation is greatly, deeply beneficial to both countries,” he said. • Putin said progress had been made that may allow Russia to lift the blockade on Ukrainian wheat. “I want to thank you for your mediation efforts,” he told Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, his Turkish counterpart, during a trip to Tehran in comments released by the Kremlin. “With your mediation, we have moved forward. Not all issues have yet been resolved, but the fact that there is movement is already good.” • Ukraine does not want the war to last into winter because it would give Russian forces time to dig in and make any Ukrainian counter-offensive more difficult. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said: “It is very important for us not to enter the winter. After winter, when the Russians will have more time to dig in, it will certainly be more difficult.” • Dmitry Medvedev, Russia’s former president, said that peace in Ukraine would be on Moscow’s terms. Medvedev, who is now deputy head of its security council, said: “Russia will achieve all its goals. There will be peace – on our terms.” Putin claimed Moscow has not seen any desire from Ukraine to fulfil the terms of what he described as a preliminary peace deal from March. • Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said Russia was laying the groundwork for the annexation of more Ukrainian territory, and installing illegitimate proxy officials in areas

	<p>under its control. Kirby, unveiling what he said was US intelligence, said Russia was seeking to establish the rouble as the default currency and force residents to apply for citizenship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volodymyr Zelenskiy said he expected “significant results” for Ukraine following his wife’s trip to Washington on Tuesday. “Increasing American support for Ukraine, additional assistance to protect people from Russian terror, addressing humanitarian needs are all the tasks of the ongoing visit of the First Lady of Ukraine to the United States,” he said. Ukraine’s first lady, Olena Zelenska, met her US counterpart Jill Biden on Tuesday ahead of her appearance on Wednesday before members of Congress. • The governor of the southern Ukraine region of Mykolaiv has offered a \$100 (£83) reward for anyone who can identify people collaborating with Russia. Vitaliy Kim offered the compensation in exchange for information about “those who reveal to the occupiers the places of deployment of Ukrainian troops” or help them establish the coordinates of potential targets. • Another six French-made Caesar artillery guns are “on their way” to Ukraine, France’s foreign minister has confirmed. Twelve of the guns, prized for their accuracy and mobility, have already been delivered to Ukraine and “the six others are on their way,” Catherine Colonna told a Senate commission. • The United States will announce a new weapons package for Ukraine in the coming days, a government official said. It is expected to include mobile rocket launchers known as HIMARS, and various artillery munitions, Reuters reports. • A special commission to control the use of weapons provided to Ukraine has been set up, according to Zelenskiy. “Our partners are fully informed about how we use the weapons provided. But in order to put an end to any manipulations of Russian propagandists and those who help them in Ukraine or somewhere else, such an additional parliamentary control tool will enter into force,” he said.
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HEADLINE	07/20 Pro-Russia separatists force conscription
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/20/pro-russian-separatists-step-up-forced-conscription-as-losses-mount
GIST	<p>Pro-Russia separatist forces have stepped up the forced conscription of men – including Ukrainian passport holders – in occupied areas of the Donbas region, amid mounting evidence of the scale of losses on the Russian side.</p> <p>According to credible evidence from the region, forced conscription – already a feature of the Russian-backed separatists’ rule before the Kremlin’s invasion on 24 February – appeared to have picked up again in June, with checkpoints and patrols, some reportedly involving Chechen fighters allied to the Kremlin, on the lookout for men to recruit.</p> <p>In one video filmed in late June, a woman in Makeevka, in the Donbas region, documented her efforts to prevent officials from the war commissariat from dragging her husband into a car to take him to the conscription office.</p> <p>In a heated exchange, in which the woman cannot be seen, she at first confronts two officials – one a heavy-set man with a gun and a black T-shirt with a “new Russia” flag, and the second man holding documents including her husband’s passport.</p> <p>“Return the passport, please,” the woman says. “There’s no martial law, you’re taking away [my husband].”</p> <p>“It’s a general mobilisation,” the first man says, as the woman demands: “Why are you here?”</p> <p>“I’m with the conscription office,” he replies.</p> <p>“Why aren’t you at the front?” the woman asks scathingly, commenting on the gold bracelet he is wearing. “You go fight where ever you want. You’re not taking [my husband] away.”</p>

A third man, standing by the door of a shop, interjects, saying: “I know where my neighbours were taken.”

“It’s voluntary. Voluntary!” the woman shouts. “He doesn’t want to go and fight!”

“He is liable to fight,” the man responds.

“But it is a Ukrainian passport. He’s not compelled to fight for you.”

At one point a man’s voice, apparently the husband’s, can be heard asking: “Why are you trying to drag me into the car”. One of the men explains: “Because I need to bring you to the conscription office to check your documents.”

As the argument continues, the woman describes how other relatives have gone to fight and die. “Nobody wants to fight! We are so sick of you and your war. You took away all the men!

“All of the young men. We’ve already buried half of them. Brother in law. Brother. Everybody, for fuck’s sake. We only have one left. We have a disabled child.”

Oleksandra Matviichuk, a human rights campaigner from the Center for Civil Liberties in Ukraine, who was sent the video by a colleague after it was posted briefly on the woman’s Telegram channel before it was blocked – apparently by local authorities – said the altercation ended with the officials leaving and ordering the man to present himself at the conscription office within two hours, and it was unclear what happened to the couple.

“The forceable conscription to army of so called DPR and LNR [the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics] – although I prefer to say by Russia – started before the full-scale war,” she said. “But since 24 February we’ve seen men stopped in the street, having passports taken and a forcibly sent to the army. After February we started receiving messages asking for help.”

Matviichuk read out one letter she received from a man in the Luhansk region who had been hiding in his flat to avoid forced conscription. “He says: ‘How can I make Russia accountable in court? This is a violation of my rights. Since February I haven’t been able go out in the street because there are patrol cars in my town searching for men without exception. They are hunting us like stray cats. The Chechen [fighters] are helping them search for men on the list.’”

Describing the circumstances of the video, Matviichuk said it appeared to have been shot after a period in June when the conscription squads had been relatively inactive, and at the beginning of a new wave of forced conscriptions.

“It appears that they started looking for men again around 23 June, putting up checkpoints on exits to towns on highways, with the war commissariat issuing notices to people in reserved occupations like factories,” she said.

“It is so unbelievably cruel. What we are seeing is a woman insisting that he is a Ukrainian citizen and how they are demanding they should be going to kill other Ukrainian citizens.

“We did some work on this before the war started and we assessed there might be as many as 500,000 men who were vulnerable to being conscripted to fight on the Russian side.”

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The renewed evidence of forced conscription comes amid well-documented issues of Russian losses in the war, and as the Kremlin has begun raising new volunteer battalions across Russia offering sign-up bonuses and recruiting in prisons.

	While Ukrainian estimates put the number of Russians killed since the war began at 38,000, western analysts suggest a figure roughly a third lower, with the UK defence officials recently suggesting a figure of about 50,000 killed and injured since February.
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HEADLINE	07/21 Vaccination % highlights global inequality
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/21/covid-vaccine-figures-lay-bare-global-inequality-as-global-target-missed
GIST	<p>The international target to vaccinate 70% of the world's population against Covid by mid-2022 was missed because poorer countries were at the “back of the queue” when vaccines were rolled out, say campaigners.</p> <p>The latest figures from Our World in Data show huge inequalities in vaccination rates around the world, with just one in seven people in low-income countries fully vaccinated. By comparison, nearly three in four people in high-income nations have been vaccinated for around a year.</p> <p>Activists are calling for a renewed push to increase vaccine take-up globally to slow the spread of the virus and prevent future variants. Their call comes as the World Health Organization said this week that Covid infections in Europe tripled and hospitalisations doubled in the past six weeks, with deaths totalling 3,000 a week.</p> <p>“Unless we achieve equitable action in addressing this pandemic, it will always remain with us in the world,” said Kavengo Matundu, Africa coordinator for Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), who has been working with frontline groups on the Covid response. “It has shown that it is capable of mutating into anything, and can become something more dangerous than the original.”</p> <p>As the first vaccines were rolled out across the world in 2020, low-income countries had to wait months to receive doses through the Covax vaccine-sharing system or from other donors. Wealthy countries had bought the lion's share of available vaccines.</p> <p>Advertisement</p> <p>When they did arrive, vaccine doses were sometimes close to their expiry date, or insufficient to meet the demands of health centres. This, said Maaza Seyoum, Global South convenor of the People's Vaccine Alliance, left people frustrated and reluctant to return to vaccination centres.</p> <p>The emergence of new variants – particularly the Delta wave, which led to high death rates in some countries – helped convince some that the vaccines did not work. “As much as there's all this naive and hopeful talk, when push comes to shove, we cannot count on rich countries to do the right thing,” said Seyoum.</p> <p>“The poorest countries in the world have ended up at the back of the queue, creating the sense that some lives matter more than others.”</p> <p>She added: “The pandemic, and the economic issues that have come with it – some of the data we've seen shows that 100 million more people have been pushed into poverty by this pandemic – make it difficult when you're asking people in that environment to take out a huge amount of time from their money making to stand in line for a vaccine.</p> <p>“We have to imagine what we would feel like if we were trying to access a service that we were told was delayed over and over.”</p> <p>According to Our World in Data figures, as of 10 July only 15.8% of people in low-income countries were fully vaccinated, compared with 55% in lower-middle income countries, 73.5% in high-income countries and 78.7% in upper-middle income countries.</p>

Africa has the lowest number of vaccinated people. Excluding Eritrea and North Korea, which have yet to start vaccination programmes, seven of the 10 countries with the world's lowest rates of full-vaccination are in Africa. The other three countries are Papua New Guinea, Haiti and Yemen. The UK's booster vaccination rate is already far higher than these countries' standard vaccination rates.

Seyoum said that Covax was "a beautiful idea built out of solidarity", but had failed "because of greed and poor planning".

The latest data from the [Duke Global Health Innovation Center](#), which covers the period up to 9 June, shows that Canada, Australia and the UK have bought enough vaccine doses to vaccinate their populations several times over: 11.1, 9.9 and 7.6 doses per person, respectively.

In contrast, South Africa was able to buy the equivalent of 0.5 doses per person. The African Union's [purchase](#) of 330m doses of Moderna and Janssen vaccines equated to just 0.2 doses a person across the bloc.

The AU and Covax have turned down opportunities to buy doses of the [AstraZeneca](#) vaccine, which has a short shelf-life, and [Moderna](#), which should be kept in very cold temperatures. Neither are suitable for countries without decent transport and [cold chain infrastructure](#).

Covax said the "ad hoc" delivery of vaccines last year made it difficult for poorer countries to plan their vaccine rollouts. With more vaccines now available, it called for deliveries to [match the timings](#) required for lower-income countries to plan their immunisation campaigns.

Dr Fifi Rahman, a civil society representative on the WHO Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator, said more people from low-income countries should be included in discussions on vaccine rollout.

She said the rollout was "almost negligently late, because you've got a bunch of New Yorkers in a room making decisions about Africa."

The Vaccine Delivery Partnership – an inter-agency organisation to accelerate vaccination coverage – was, she added, "doing a great job, but it was extremely late".

Seyoum said: "Rich countries keep thinking that if they just protect themselves, they're going to get out of the pandemic, but that is, on a public health front, completely ridiculous. It sounds trite, but as the head of WHO said last year: none of us is safe until we're all safe."

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HEADLINE	07/20 Dangerous: 100M in path of heat wave
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/dangerous-heat-wave-to-hit-more-than-100-million-americans-11658321344?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>More than 100 million Americans were in the path of a dangerous heat wave Wednesday, from the West to the Northeast, officials said.</p> <p>Temperatures in the triple digits were recorded from Arizona to Louisiana, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Forecasters warned the roughly one-third of Americans that were under heat alerts to drink fluids and stay out of the sun, saying that excessive heat could cause them to develop heat-related illnesses.</p> <p>"Scorching heat will remain a major weather story over at least the next few days," said Cody Snell, a meteorologist for the NWS. He added that even low temperatures would remain warm in the upper 70s or low 80s.</p>

The heat was especially sweltering Wednesday in central California, the Southwest, the Plains, the mid-Atlantic and the Northeast, which were under excessive heat warnings and heat advisories. The conditions threatened to fan the [patchwork of 86 fires](#) burning across the U.S. on Wednesday, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Officials across the country opened cooling centers to keep residents out of the sun. Boston officials [declared a heat emergency](#) through Thursday, while Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont activated the state's "extreme hot weather protocol." In New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul warned residents [to stay indoors](#) because of the heat and humidity.

Philadelphia issued its first heat-health emergency of the summer for Thursday, ahead of hot and humid conditions forecast through Sunday. A special healthline will be available, cooling sites will be opened and dozens of parks will have "spraygrounds" where residents can cool off.

Tuesday was the hottest day of the year across Oklahoma and western northwestern Texas, according to the National Weather Service in Norman, Okla. A high of 116 degrees was recorded at two places in the state and the lowest high temperature on Tuesday in the entire state was 106 degrees.

Dallas reached 109 degrees on Tuesday, breaking the 2018 record of 108 degrees. And temperatures in North Texas were set to reach at least 105 degrees on Wednesday, according to the National Weather Service in Fort Worth, Texas.

The hot, dry conditions increased the potential for significant wildfires in parts of the state, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service. The service [said it responded](#) to 24 wildfires over 7,774 acres on Tuesday.

The National Weather Service said "anomalously high" temperatures are expected to stay through the week in most of the country, with triple digits expected in parts of the South-Central U.S. Hotter temperatures will occur in the Pacific Northwest early next week.

Parts of the Midwest were expected to be spared from much of the heat. Instead, cooler weather is forecast for the Great Lakes region, with highs in the 70s and 80s, the NWS's Weather Prediction Center wrote [in a forecast](#) on Wednesday afternoon.

July has been a relentlessly hot month in Europe, too, where a [record-breaking heat wave](#) has been blamed for hundreds of deaths across the continent. The heat and a drought fueled wildfires across swaths of Southern Europe, forcing thousands of people to evacuate their homes.

[Rising temperatures around the world](#), which most climate scientists attribute to greenhouse-gas emissions, have caused a record number of heat waves, droughts and wildfires. Last year was one of the hottest on record, according to two federal agencies, which also reported that the U.S. recorded its hottest summer last year since 1936.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Vaccine mandate for state workers to stay
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3570819/vaccine-mandate-here-to-stay-state-employees-according-gov-inslee/
GIST	<p>Governor Jay Inslee announced the vaccine mandate for state employees will stay alongside the state of emergency Washington is currently under during a press conference addressing the state's biggest current issues.</p> <p>"We think that makes sense to save people. It's just such a heartbreak when you lose a good state employee. I just felt it was the right thing as a manager to keep a safe workplace and keep people safe," Inslee said at his press conference. "So that will be retained after the declaration of emergency leaves. And we have the authority to do that as the employer. We're just an employer like anyone else."</p> <p>Inslee mentioned how often this decision has been challenged, claiming he's been told it's unconstitutional "a thousand times by certain people on radio."</p>

	“We’ve won 42 lawsuits in a row on the actions we’ve taken,” Inslee said. “I’m confident that this is within our authority.”
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HEADLINE	07/20 Seattle-area real estate prices still rising
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3570810/bidding-wars-seattle-area-real-estate-prices/
GIST	<p>The home buying bidding wars are starting to subside in the Seattle area.</p> <p>The share of homes, listed by Redfin, that faced competition in June was 41%, down from 61% in May, and nearly 72% in June of 2021.</p> <p>Even so, home prices kept climbing in June. The national median home price jumped 13.4% in June, compared to the year before.</p> <p>Here in the Seattle area, Redfin says the “year over year” median sale price of a home increased 11.2%.</p> <p>The Seattle-based real estate brokerage says high inflation and rising interest rates are taking a “bite” out of home-buyers’ budgets.</p> <p>“This is definitely unprecedented. This is the fastest mortgage rates have gone up. And it was during a time when housing market demand was incredibly hot. So I think it’s It goes to show how important mortgage rates are in terms of the competitiveness of the housing market. And it’s not surprising, but it is dramatic,” Daryl Fairweather, chief economist for Redfin, told KIRO Newsradio.</p> <p>Real estate investment firms buy up nearly 10% of King County’s residential homes in 2021</p> <p>Tampa, Florida saw the lowest “bidding war rate” in June at 29%. On the other side of the spectrum, Providence, Road Island, and Boston, Massachusetts both saw rates above 70%.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Chelan fire a ‘dress rehearsal’ to fire season
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3570011/fire-season-here-say-experts-chelan-fire-continues-burn/
GIST	<p>As the Stayman fire in Chelan, Wash. continues to burn, and firefighters work to get the wildfire under control, the fire signals the start of wildfire season in much of the state.</p> <p>While the fire evacuation was recently downgraded from a level three to a level two evacuation, warning residents to just be prepared to evacuate rather than a full evacuation, it is still only 30% contained as of publishing.</p> <p>Ryan Rodruck, Public Information Officer for the Stayman fire said that the fire “did die down somewhat overnight, however, winds and terrain are still challenging and we are continuing to address containment lines on the fire.”</p> <p>After an unusually wet spring and early summer season, many were expecting it to impact fire season in Washington state this year, but as the July heat waves increase, just like clockwork fire season begins says meteorologist Ted Buehner.</p> <p>“We are running into some hot and dry conditions. The wildfire season had somewhat of a delayed start just because of that extra moisture that we saw in the spring. However, as those temperatures have begun to rise, those fuels are drying out and creating an elevated wildfire risk,” Rodruck said.</p> <p>This is just the first fire expected to hit the state as a part of the yearly fire season that happens when the state hits it’s hottest temperatures, usually in July. We can expect more fires, says Buehner, and fire crews need to be ready.</p>

	<p>“Crews overnight got a lot done [at the Stayman fire,] but I look at it as a dress rehearsal for what we will see for the rest of the month and on into September,” Buehner said. “Fire Season is here folk, delayed but not cancelled.”</p> <p>As the weather does continue to get hotter, Rodruck is asking the public to be mindful of what they are doing, especially when enjoying the outdoors with camping or road trips.</p> <p>“Please respect those campfire and outdoor burning restrictions,” Rodruck said. “If you are recreating in a trailer or boat, make sure that those chains aren’t dragging on the pavement. And please help us keep sparks off the landscape.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Buenos Aires bans gender-neutral language
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/20/world/americas/argentina-gender-neutral-spanish.html
GIST	<p>BUENOS AIRES — Instead of “amigos,” the Spanish word for “friends,” some Spanish speakers use “amigues.” In place of “todos,” or “all,” some write “todxs.” And some signs that would say “bienvenidos,” or “welcome,” now say “bienvenid@s.”</p> <p>The changes, which had been informally adopted by teachers in schools across Buenos Aires, were a deliberate effort to include people who don’t identify as male or female in a language where many words are categorized as either masculine or feminine.</p> <p>Similar gender-neutral language is being increasingly introduced across Latin America, as well as in other languages, including English and French, by supporters who say it helps create a more inclusive society.</p> <p>But to some Spanish speakers, including many academics and politicians, the changes degrade a language spoken by a half-billion people around the world.</p> <p>In Argentina, the tension has shifted from a war of public opinion to a battle over policy.</p> <p>The city government in Buenos Aires, the nation’s capital, last month banned teachers from using any gender-neutral words during class and in communications with parents. The city’s education minister said such language violated the rules of Spanish and stymied student’s reading comprehension.</p> <p>The policy, among the first anywhere to specifically forbid the use of gender-neutral language, provoked a swift backlash. Argentina’s top education official criticized the rule and at least five organizations, a mix of gay rights and civil rights groups, have filed lawsuits seeking to overturn it.</p> <p>Jaime Perczyk, Argentina’s education minister, compared the measure to prohibitions against left-handed writing under the fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco in Spain. “They thought they were correcting something, but it goes much deeper,” he said, explaining that students use gender-neutral language as a tool to fight sexist attitudes prevalent in Argentine culture.</p> <p>In Romance languages, including Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese, the debate over gender-neutral terminology can be particularly fierce because all grammar is gendered.</p> <p>Gender-neutral language has scandalized linguistic purists. The Royal Academy in Spain, considered by many as the gatekeeper of the Spanish language, described the use of “e,” “@,” and “X” — which are used in place of the “o” and “a” that often signify a word’s gender — as “alien to the morphology of Spanish” in a 2020 report.</p> <p>Last year, France’s education minister recommended avoiding inclusive writing in the ministry’s communications and in schools. A prominent French dictionary triggered outrage last October after it added, “iel,” a gender-neutral singular pronoun.</p>

The debate has also become part of an emerging culture war in Latin America. In December, Uruguay's public education agency issued a [memo](#) limiting the use of inclusive language to be "in accordance with the rules of the Spanish language."

Proposals to ban gender-neutral language in schools or government documents have been pushed in [Peru](#), some states in [Mexico](#), and in [at least](#) 34 municipalities and states in Brazil.

Gender-neutral language has also become an issue in October's election in Brazil. The country's president, Jair Bolsonaro, who is seeking a second term, [told reporters](#) in December during a discussion about education that "the gays' gender-neutral language" is "screwing up our kids."

In Colombia, Francia Márquez, the recently elected vice-president, was [pilloried](#) by conservative critics for using gender-neutral language during her campaign. "God save Colombia!" Margarita Restrepo, a legislator from a right-wing party, wrote in a tweet.

The debate is also playing out in the United States, where the gender-neutral term "Latinx" was added to a [widely used dictionary](#) in 2018. But even among Hispanic people, many have not heard of the term and few — mainly young college-educated women — use it, according to a [survey](#) in 2019 by the Pew Research Center.

The push for changes to Romance languages originated among feminists in at least the 1970s who challenged the use of the generic masculine, a grammatical rule in which the masculine form takes precedence when referring to a group of people if the group includes even one man. (In Spanish, five girls are "las niñas," but once a boy joins, they become "los niños.")

In France, instead of using "chers étudiants," the masculine form of "dear students," feminists promoted the use of double forms that included a feminine spelling, such as "chers étudiants et chères étudiantes," said Heather Burnett, a linguist at France's national research agency.

Today, a new wave of activists is going further. Many transgender people want to erase grammatical gender terms altogether. Instead of using "queridos alumnos y queridas alumnas" ("dear students" in male and female form), they prefer, for example, to use "querides alumnas."

The movement around language, some experts say, is part of a broader challenge to the way society perceives gender.

"With nonbinary people, language is just the tip of the iceberg," said Rodrigo Borba, a professor of applied linguistics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. "What they are questioning on a deeper, ideological level is that gender is not connected to your genitalia and that it does not only come in pairs."

Argentina is a surprising place for such a heated debate on gender-neutral language because the country has largely embraced transgender rights. In 2012, it became one of the first countries in the world to pass a [law](#) allowing people to change their gender on official documents without requiring the intervention of a doctor or a mental health therapist.

Last year, the federal government adopted a measure requiring that 1 percent of all public sector jobs be set aside for transgender people. Those who identify as nonbinary are allowed to mark an "X" on official documents, rather than check off male or female. One of the president's children is a [nonbinary](#) drag queen.

Even the ruling coalition — Front for All — has [changed](#) its logo to avoid using the masculine form of "todos" by replacing the second "o" with a sun.

In Buenos Aires, the city's education minister, Soledad Acuña, said the new rule on inclusive language is not intended to be a ban. "Language itself is neither more nor less inclusive," she said in an interview. "It all depends on how people use it."

On the same day the rule was introduced, Ms. Acuña said, the ministry published several guides on how to be inclusive using traditional Spanish grammar. They suggest, for example, writing "los/as estudiantes" or using neutral words like "personas" or "people."

But the guides have done little to mollify activists and some students who said the new language decree left them feeling ostracized.

"It just makes you feel really bad," said Agostina Fernández Tirra, 17, who identifies as nonbinary and attends a public school in Buenos Aires. "They put us all in the same box — you are either female or male. Those of us in the middle, who are neither male nor female, it's like they don't even consider you."

Some parents and teachers have cheered the rule. Gender-neutral language "is not even that inclusive," said Vanina María Casali, the principal of a primary school in Palermo, an upscale Buenos Aires neighborhood. "In our school, there are kids with learning difficulties, and such language makes it even harder for them to learn."

What influence, if any, gender-neutral language has on reading comprehension is unclear, said Florencia Salvarezza, a neuroscientist in Argentina who works on cognition, because little, if any research has been done on the subject.

But, Ms. Salvarezza added, it is plausible that gender-neutral language could complicate learning. "There is no way to create a syllable in Spanish with the 'x' or the '@' because they are not vowels," she said. "That might confuse young children."

Still, advocates and others involved in Buenos Aires's schools believe that despite the rule the use of gender-neutral language will continue to expand.

"You can't prohibit something that's already so in use," says Alexandra Rodríguez, an after-school volunteer at a community center. "Language is something that's always being modified. It's alive because we are alive — and it will keep on changing."

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HEADLINE	07/20 Ukraine attacks key Russia targets in south
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/20/world/ukraine-russia-war#ukraine-russia-war-kherson
GIST	<p>A critical bridge shelled. A fighter jet shot out of the sky. Ammunition depots destroyed. A cluster of soldiers attacked.</p> <p>Ukraine's intensifying attacks on Russian forces in just the last 48 hours in Kherson Province are raising a question: Is the ground being laid for a broad counteroffensive?</p> <p>The southern city of Kherson fell to Russian forces in early March, and Moscow is now trying to absorb the province. Kherson, a port and shipbuilding center, is also a staging ground for Russia's military operations across southern Ukraine.</p> <p>That means any attempt to recapture the city would have immense strategic and symbolic value for the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky. A counteroffensive also would signal a significant shift in the war, and the timing is critical. A Pentagon spokesman said on Tuesday that Russia planned to annex territories it has captured, including Kherson.</p> <p>"Ukraine and its Western partners may have a narrowing window of opportunity to support a Ukrainian counteroffensive into occupied Ukrainian territory before the Kremlin annexes that territory," said the spokesman, John Kirby.</p>

Since April, Ukrainian forces have effectively been locked into a defensive posture as they gradually retreated from an onslaught of Russian artillery in the eastern Donbas region. The Russians have not seized new territory in weeks, and the Ukrainians say their defensive positions have stabilized.

But the purpose of the longer-range missile systems that Ukraine has been pleading for, and that Western countries have increasingly started to supply to its government, is not just to forestall Russia's advance, but also to win back lost territory.

"We all strive to liberate Ukraine from the enemy," the spokeswoman for Ukraine's southern forces, Natalia Humeniuk, said on Tuesday. "We have a single goal."

Ukraine used a [HIMARS artillery weapon](#), newly supplied by the United States, to hit the [Antonivsky bridge](#) in Kherson on Tuesday, an adviser to country's interior minister said. The bridge has been the main transit route for Russian supplies coming in from Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014. Eleven more missiles hit the bridge on Wednesday, according to the deputy head of the pro-Russia administration in Kherson.

The bridge is a "key vulnerability for Russian forces," a British intelligence report said.

Ukraine's armed forces also said on Wednesday that they had blown up a Russian radar system in Kherson using missiles fired from more than 60 miles away — a day after Ukraine's air force command said it had shot down a Russian fighter jet above agricultural land in Kherson and struck warehouses that are crucial for resupplying Russia's forces west of the Dnipro River.

Ukrainian forces also struck a cluster of Russian forces, an adviser to the head of the province's military administration said on Tuesday, adding that casualties were still being assessed.

Those accounts could not be independently verified, although some of the attacks were captured on video. Since May, Ukrainian forces have fought a [series of skirmishes](#) in northern Kherson, reclaiming villages, targeting rail lines and fighting for control of roads. It has been unclear whether the advances were primarily intended to divert Moscow's forces from larger battles in Donbas or were the prelude to a bigger regional push.

If Ukraine does mount a broad counteroffensive, it will force both sides to confront difficult decisions, military analysts say. For Mr. Zelensky, it will test whether his forces are capable of doing more than holding their ground and whether his vow to reclaim ground lost to Russia since 2014 is feasible.

Russia's military, on the other hand, would need to decide how deeply to commit to the defense of a territory, particularly if the bridge is destroyed and the resupply of its forces under attack becomes more difficult.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Europe northern cities ready warmer world?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/20/world/europe/london-heat-wave-cities.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — When storm clouds rolled into London on Tuesday evening, the rain brought with it much-needed relief for sweltering city residents after a day of record-breaking heat that drove wildfires, disrupted train travel and strained the city's infrastructure and health services.</p> <p>The heat had cleared on Wednesday but it left behind a city newly full of anxieties about how London and other European cities can cope with the rising frequency of such extreme weather events.</p> <p>Philipp Rode, the executive director of LSE Cities, a research center at the London School of Economics, said that criticism ahead of the heat wave that warnings from meteorologists, the media, urban planners and climate scientists were "hysterical" proved to be false on Tuesday.</p>

“That idea has been completely debunked, because the effects are fairly dramatic,” Dr. Rode said. “Particularly the fires became very symbolic for not just the unpreparedness, but also for not really appreciating what has been said for decades — that this would happen.”

The heat wave led to huge wildfires in France, Spain, Italy and Greece, and parts of England reached 40 degrees Celsius — 104 Fahrenheit — for the first time on record Tuesday, while Paris hit that mark for only the third time.

It is part of a worrying trend, driven by global warming, with temperatures worldwide on average about 2 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the late 19th century, before emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases became widespread. [Scientists say that heat waves have increased in frequency and intensity](#) faster in Europe than in almost any other part of the planet.

London and other European cities at northern latitudes, where historically heat was a rare threat but cold a frequent one, need to adapt to remain livable, Dr. Rode said.

“We have prepared a very sophisticated infrastructure system, the railways, the energy systems, all the way to how we design school buildings and hospitals — for very specific climate,” he said, with planning across Britain around a temperature span of around negative 10 to 35 degrees Celsius. “And yesterday, we exceeded that, and that then results in these collapses.”

London Ambulance Service [said in a statement](#) that there was a sustained demand for its service, which put the organization under “extreme pressure,” as a direct result of the heat wave. [Early data showed that on Tuesday](#), there was a tenfold increase in emergency calls to treat heat exposure incidents compared with the week previous.

Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, said on Wednesday morning that Tuesday was the city fire service’s busiest day since World War II. Fire destroyed some 41 properties, many of them near grassy areas that had turned to kindling in the brutal heat, allowing blazes to spread quickly.

“It shows the consequences of climate change with temperatures exceeding 40 degrees,” Mr. Khan said in an interview with BBC News.

Firefighters and their union said years of underfunding had left them woefully unprepared, with some crews on duty for as long as 14 hours without breaks, food or water, and no backup available. London’s Fire Brigade said staffing shortages left more than one-quarter of its fire engines out of service on Tuesday.

At times every engine in service was in use — not a single one was left to respond to a new emergency, a union official said.

Extreme weather fueled by climate change has also hit European cities with severe flooding. A year ago, fierce summer storms wreaked havoc from Britain to Croatia. [Western Germany](#) was hardest hit, with nearly 200 people killed, and London saw a month’s worth of rain in one day, [bringing much of the city to a standstill](#).

Dr. Rode noted that there has been little political will to engage with the issue of extreme heat, as there would be in places like Australia or California where damaging wildfires occur regularly.

“But here we don’t have that, so I think what can we hope for is that it’s a wake-up call,” he said. “People must appreciate that while you can of course prepare better, this is just a taste of what’s to come.”

Homes in northern Europe were largely built to retain heat, not dissipate it, and many are poorly ventilated. In a dense city like London, poor air quality, abundant pavement and a relative absence of greenery all reinforce each other’s effects, said Léan Doody, who leads the integrated cities and planning network for Europe for Arup, a British engineering firm.

Yet major cities remain largely unprepared for this new reality of extremes, leaving city officials struggling to respond.

“I think things need to happen a lot quicker,” Ms. Doody said. “It should be well known that there are these risks, but I think that it’s like everything — the day-to-day takes over.”

A spokesperson for the London mayor’s office said in a statement that he “has been clear that urgent action to combat climate change is needed and he is already taking some of the most radical action of any world city to adapt London to our changing climate.”

But, the statement added that the British national government has “been underprepared for this heat event and the fact that we are already facing the impacts of climate change,” and it said that action was needed now to “tackle the risk of overheating in London.”

The mayor’s office said it worked with local authorities across the city to ensure that the most vulnerable residents had access to somewhere to cool down during the heat wave. Its “London Plan,” a longer-term development blueprint for the city, encourages builders to design for extreme weather scenarios.

Cities, where natural landscapes have been replaced with densely packed buildings, concrete and blacktop, get hotter and retain heat longer than surrounding areas — the “urban heat island” effect, a major concern as the climate warms.

England’s broader heat wave plan, [published by the government this month](#), includes advice to individuals on how to stay safe and guidance on how to protect infrastructure.

But critics say it doesn’t go far enough toward addressing the issue with the kind of urgency that is needed. And if greenhouse emissions aren’t drastically curbed, no amount of altering cities will be enough, Dr. Rode said.

“Adaptation at some point has physical boundaries,” he said. “There are certain conditions, which you simply, with all the intelligence and all the investments we have and the technology, where it exceeds our capacity to adapt.”

This week’s heat made it clear that even adaptation has barely begun. Nursing homes, many in older, poorly ventilated buildings, struggled to keep residents hydrated and cool. Parents wrestled with whether it was safer to keep their children in overheated apartments or send them to overheated schools.

London’s Tube network can be stifling on an ordinary summer day — most of the trains do not have air-conditioning, and older tunnels have few ventilation shafts. In a heat wave, the system can become unbearably hot.

Train tracks can expand, warp and buckle in extreme heat, a danger that forced cancellation of some rail services this week and prompted others to operate at reduced speed. On the heels of that disruption, Britain’s rail network started a task force on how to withstand future heat waves — addressing a long-anticipated crisis after it has arrived.

Simon Fox, an academic who was stranded in London for two days after his train to Leeds was canceled, said he felt the “tired resignation of a population all too used to a decaying infrastructure.”

Mr. Fox was again waiting for a train in Kings Cross station on Wednesday, along with a crowd of others trying to find a way to continue their journeys amid severe delays.

“One warm gust was all it took to make it tumble,” he said.

HEADLINE	07/20 Trying to keep up w/faster virus evolution
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/20/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=style-coronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#&_r=0
GIST	<p>The rapid evolution of the coronavirus into an alphabet soup of subvariants presents a vexing challenge to health officials: They must make far-reaching policy decisions based on little biological certainty of which viral variants will be dominant this fall or winter.</p> <p>The Food and Drug Administration said at the end of June that it would likely update coronavirus vaccines for a booster campaign in the fall targeting highly contagious Omicron subvariants. But the ground is shifting beneath its feet.</p> <p>In just eight weeks, the subvariant known as BA.5 has gone from a blip in U.S. case counts to the dominant version of the virus in the country, now making up more than three-quarters of new cases. Perhaps the most transmissible subvariant yet, it is pushing up positive tests, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions across the country,</p> <p>There is no evidence that BA.5 causes more severe disease, but the latest metrics certainly bust the myth that the virus will become milder as it evolves.</p> <p>“None of us has a crystal ball, and we are trying to use every last ounce of what we can from predictive modeling and from the data that we have to try to get ahead of a virus that has been very crafty,” said Dr. Peter Marks, a top vaccine regulator at the F.D.A., after an advisory committee recommended that the agency prioritize boosters specific to the Omicron subvariants. “For something that’s only nanometers in size, it’s pretty darn crafty. We’re trying to make our best judgment here.”</p> <p>Omicron and its offshoots have dominated for about six months now, and whatever incarnation of the virus comes next is more likely to be tied to the Omicron family than to earlier versions, said Jerry Weir, a senior F.D.A. regulator.</p> <p>That assumption is the best calculation that can be made at this time, according to outside experts not on the F.D.A. expert panel.</p> <p>“Viruses like SARS-CoV-2 are always evolving, and it’s a near certainty that new mutants will emerge in any given six-month time frame,” said Jesse Bloom of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle. “But as long as these mutants are descendants or close relatives of BA.2 or BA.4/BA.5, then a vaccine booster based on BA.4/BA.5, as the F.D.A. has recommended, should be a much better match to them than the current vaccine, even if it’s not a perfect match.”</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday cleared a fourth vaccine, from Novavax, for use in the United States, but its trials were conducted before the emergence of Omicron and its effectiveness against the variant could be limited. Federal regulators have not yet considered it for a booster shot.</p> <p>The Omicron family tree has been growing faster since the version of Omicron known as BA.1 was first detected in late November 2021. New federal estimates on Tuesday showed that BA.5 made up about 78 percent of new cases in the United States as of last week.</p> <p>Emma Hodcroft, a molecular epidemiologist and researcher at the University of Bern in Switzerland, said Omicron’s evolution pattern had diverged from that of earlier variants. “The children of Delta were not dominant, but the children of Omicron are pushing out their siblings, if you will,” she said. “That’s hinting that Omicron is at the peak and that there will be smaller changes.”</p> <p>Though more Omicron children could be on the way, she and other scientists emphasized that this would not preclude another variant appearing.</p>

“Too many times we have made predictions on how we think SARS-CoV-2 will evolve and then been emphatically wrong,” said Nathan Grubaugh, an epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health. Last fall, he correctly predicted that an immune-evasive subvariant would emerge, but his expectation that it would come from the Delta variant was wrong.

“Obviously, we are seeing new variants emerge from within Omicron right now — BA.2, BA.4 and BA.5 — and that may continue to happen,” he said. “But we shouldn’t become unimaginative and think that will continue.”

Last year, Sarah Cobey, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Chicago, was almost certain that the next variant would descend from Delta. “I nonetheless think it’s extremely likely the next variant will descend from Omicron,” she said last week, adding that it could have a wider degree of immune escape or increased transmissibility. “It’s likely the next variant has emerged already but will evade surveillance for some time,” she said.

An ominous Omicron cousin, BA.2.75, is already being seen in parts of the world.

That makes tweaking the formula for booster shots more critical, according to Kristian Andersen, a virologist at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif. The benefits of such a move have much more to do with broadening immunity than with increasing protection against a very specific variant, he said. Early variants did not evolve from previous variants but rather from earlier lineages, he said, unlike Omicron, making predictions harder.

Forecasting, though, is every expert’s stock in trade.

“We’ve been trying to better guess the next flu variant for decades,” Dr. Hodcroft said. “And it turns out that it’s very complicated.”

The many variables mean that she and other experts cannot make a declaration with full confidence. She said, “It’s very hard to put these all into a machine and crunch it.”

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HEADLINE	07/20 Pandemic fatal ODs hit minorities harder
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/20/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#overdose-pandemic-race
GIST	<p>The pandemic’s devastating impact on drug overdose deaths in the United States hit people of color the hardest, with rates among young Black people rising the most sharply, according to a federal report that was released on Tuesday and that analyzed overdose data by race, age and income.</p> <p>Overall, overdose deaths jumped 30 percent from 2019 to 2020, the report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Deaths among Black people rose 44 percent, about twice the increase in deaths among white people (22 percent) or Hispanic people (21 percent). Deaths among American Indians and Alaska Natives increased 39 percent.</p> <p>Measured as a portion of the population, in 2020, deaths among Black people were higher than in any other racial or ethnic group — 39 per 100,000, compared with 31 for white people, 36 for American Indian and Alaska Native people and 21 for Hispanic people.</p> <p>“The disproportionate increase in overdose death rates among Blacks and American Indian and Alaska Native people may partly be due to health inequities, like unequal access to substance use treatment and treatment biases,” said Dr. Debra Houry, acting principal deputy director of the C.D.C.</p> <p>The racial breakouts were based on data from Washington, D.C., and 25 states that had completed analyses. The study included data from some states where overdose death rates rose, such as Georgia,</p>

Kentucky and Maine, but not from others with high rates, like Florida, New York and Michigan. C.D.C. researchers said that, nonetheless, the trends they saw in this data mirrored statistical racial breakouts across the country.

Nationwide, overdose deaths have continued to rise since 2020, although the [rate has slowed somewhat](#). The impact on different races became even more striking when age was factored in. In 2020, the death rate from overdoses in men 65 and older was nearly seven times greater for Black men than for white men. In Black people ages 15 to 24, the overdose death rate rose 86 percent from 2019 to 2020.

Authors of the study said the deaths were driven largely by illicitly produced fentanyl, with some triggered by the combination of other drugs — such as methamphetamine and cocaine — with the opioids.

The pandemic exacerbated the spiral, the authors said. With people young and old isolated from social services, peers, family and treatment centers, to say nothing of a drop in income for many, drugs became a distraction and a solace.

The results showed in harsh relief the racial divide with respect to access to treatment for substance abuse. Although the data showed that treatment was sparse among all those who died, the portion of people who had received treatment for substance abuse was smallest among Black people (8.3 percent), or about half that of white people who had sought treatment and later died.

Income inequality also deepened that chasm, the report said.

Perhaps surprisingly, the report said that overdose death rates generally were higher in counties with more treatment services and mental health care providers. Again, the impact varied according to race. Among American Indian and Alaska Native people and Black people, for example, the rate in 2020 in counties with at least one opioid treatment program was more than twice that in counties that lacked such services.

Among counties with comparatively more treatment options than others, overdose death rates from 2019 to 2020 increased 49 percent among Black people, compared with 19 percent among white people.

“Just because there’s the availability of services doesn’t mean that those services are actually accessible,” said Mbabazi Kariisa, the lead author of the report and a health scientist with the Division of Overdose Prevention at the C.D.C. She noted that limited transportation and insurance options could be problematic. In addition, she said, fear of being stigmatized and a pervasive mistrust of the health care system could also be significant factors.

The report also noted that in counties that were geographically large, a treatment center might be located in a dense population center, which would make access challenging for those in far-flung areas. But it is difficult to pinpoint a causal relationship between the presence of a clinic and death rates: A county with high rates of drug abuse and overdose deaths might simply be more likely to have a clinic.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Administration creates new federal agency
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/20/us/politics/hhs-aspr-biden.html
GIST	<p>The Biden administration is creating a new division within the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate the nation’s response to pandemic threats and other health emergencies, a recognition that the department is structurally ill equipped to handle disasters like the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>The change, announced internally on Wednesday, will elevate an existing office — that of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, known as ASPR — to its own operating division, the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response.</p> <p>The move effectively creates a new federal agency — on par with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration — that will be responsible for crucial health logistics,</p>

including oversight of the [Strategic National Stockpile](#), the nation's emergency medical reserve, and contracting for and distributing vaccines in an emergency.

The aim is to increase the office's authority and consolidate its powers so that it can operate as a counterpart to the C.D.C., the F.D.A. and the National Institutes of Health, which all manage various aspects of an emergency response. But it may also create tensions between those agencies — which have their own campuses outside of Washington — and the new division, which will operate out of H.H.S. headquarters in the capital.

“This change allows ASPR to mobilize a coordinated national response more quickly and stably during future disasters and emergencies while equipping us with greater hiring and contracting capabilities,” Dawn O’Connell, the assistant secretary for preparedness and response, wrote to employees on Wednesday in an email announcing the change, [which was first reported by The Washington Post](#).

On the surface, elevating an office to a division might seem like Washington bureaucratic reshuffling. But people familiar with the change say the new division will build on work the preparedness and response office already does, incorporating capabilities it has built up during the pandemic.

In 2018, ASPR was put in charge of the national stockpile; it had previously been run by the C.D.C., which bitterly opposed the move. The stockpile was short on basic supplies, including ventilators, masks and other protective gear, at the outset of the pandemic, and stands today as a searing example of the failures of that early response.

Ms. O’Connell also already oversees the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, which is responsible for developing innovative vaccines and therapeutics. That agency was [thrust into the spotlight](#) in 2020, when President Donald J. Trump fired its director.

But at the start of the pandemic, the assistant secretary running ASPR lacked the capability to contract with companies to purchase vaccines, and was forced to rely on the Department of Defense to handle purchasing and distribution of the shots. Elevating the office into an operating division will enable it to take over some of those responsibilities, people familiar with the move say. Ms. O’Connell said new hiring and contracting authority would be phased in “over a period of time.”

In her memo, Ms. O’Connell said her office’s newer “missions,” such as overseeing the national stockpile, were “pushing it against the limits of a typical staff division.”

The decision appeared to catch some top federal health officials by surprise, including at the White House and the C.D.C., senior officials said.

Lawrence Gostin, a former C.D.C. adviser who directs the O’Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University, said the announcement Wednesday was “more than a little vague, which makes it even more frustrating.”

“It’s always tempting when an agency performs badly to sideline it or to designate its key functions to another agency, or to even defund it, which I think will happen as a consequence of this, when the right answer is to fix it,” he said. “Rather than raising the agency back to its days of pre-eminence, we’ve curbed it. I think the Biden administration and future administrations will rue the day that they clipped C.D.C.’s wings.”

A spokeswoman for the C.D.C. said the agency “is supportive of Assistant Secretary O’Connell’s vision for ASPR — a critical partner for us in addressing public health threats.”

“We will continue to work closely together to advance and protect the health of the American people,” said the spokeswoman, Kristen Nordlund.

	<p>Dr. Luciana Borio, a former acting chief scientist at the F.D.A. and National Security Council official, said that the office was always meant to be a more strategic arm of the federal health bureaucracy than an operational one.</p> <p>“We have to be careful that the new entity doesn’t become saddled with operational responsibilities,” she said. “We need to leverage the whole of government for that.”</p> <p>“We’ve seen over and over again that it isn’t about a single entity responding” in a pandemic, she said.</p> <p>If the change at H.H.S. shifts authority or responsibility, she added, “I’m concerned it will be unclear who’s in charge and it will create more confusion. The C.D.C. is essential to the response. Any act that further erodes C.D.C.’s role will be detrimental.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 CIA: China plans Taiwan takeover few years
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/20/william-burns-cia-chief-says-china-plans-taiwan-ta/
GIST	<p>Chinese President Xi Jinping is determined to take control of Taiwan but is studying the lessons of Russian military shortfalls in Ukraine before taking action, CIA Director William Burns said Wednesday.</p> <p>Mr. Burns said he would not underestimate Mr. Xi’s determination to assert Chinese control over Taiwan, and military action could come in the next few years.</p> <p>The Chinese leader is working to make sure the People’s Liberation Army has the capabilities needed for a successful invasion of the democratic island located about 100 miles off the Chinese coast.</p> <p>Mr. Xi, since taking power in 2013, has made a takeover of Taiwan a national priority and a focus of the PLA’s large-scale military buildup.</p> <p>“I think the risks of [an invasion] become higher, it seems to us, the further into this decade you get,” Mr. Burns said in comments Wednesday afternoon to the Aspen Security Forum.</p> <p>“The Chinese leadership is trying to study the lessons of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and what it tells them,” he said.</p> <p>The CIA director, a former career diplomat, said his agency’s analysts assess that it is “less the question of whether the Chinese leadership might choose some years down the road to use force to control Taiwan, but how and when they would do it.”</p> <p>A major lesson for Beijing from Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is that decisive victories cannot be achieved when using “underwhelming force.”</p> <p>Russian military forces sent around 190,000 troops into Ukraine in February expecting the government in Kyiv to fall within a week. Instead, Ukrainian military forces fought back fiercely.</p> <p>China’s political and military leaders believe that a successful attack against Taiwan will require overwhelming military power to be successful, he said.</p> <p>The Pentagon has been working closely with Taiwan since the Russian invasion of Ukraine to bolster the island’s defense’s against Chinese military action.</p> <p>U.S.-China tensions over Taiwan have been high in recent months as Chinese military forces have conducted provocative flights and naval maneuvers near the island.</p>

Earlier this week, the Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold, following two freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, sailed through the Taiwan Strait in a show of support for Taipei, the Navy said in a statement.

President Biden also has said the United States would intervene militarily in support of Taiwan, although the White House later walked back the statement.

The governments of both Japan and Australia have said they would join a U.S.-led defense of Taiwan.

In addition to military forces, the Chinese will need to attack Taiwan “in the information space” and bolster their own country in advance of any operation by preparing for economic and other sanctions from the outside world, Mr. Burns said.

China also would carry out diplomatic operations to drive wedges aimed at separating the United States from its allies throughout the Asia-Pacific region in preparation for an attack.

Some analysts have speculated that Mr. Xi will attack Taiwan after a major Chinese Communist Party Congress this fall that is expected to further solidify the Chinese leader’s dictatorial grip, but Mr. Burns said the thinks that unlikely.

Regarding Chinese support for Russia, Mr. Burns said the Chinese have stepped up purchases of Russian energy resources but does not appear to be making major sales of arms and military gear to Russia.

Mr. Xi and other Chinese leaders were “unsettled” by the beating the Russian military has been taking in Ukraine, and Beijing also is concerned that the invasion had driven European nations closer to the U.S.

China has been seeking to weaken the NATO alliance by providing economic and diplomatic support to many European nations.

On Russia, Mr. Burns said Mr. Putin has hardened his views on Moscow’s drive to again become a major world power and noted that his “appetite for risk has grown.”

Mr. Burns also dismissed reports that the Russian leader was ill, either mentally or physically.

“As far as we can tell he’s fairly healthy,” he said.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Executive actions on climate change
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/20/biden-unveils-executive-action-climate-change-stop/
GIST	<p>President Biden announced executive actions Wednesday to combat climate change, but chose not to heed calls from members of his own party to declare a national emergency to unlock a variety of additional powers.</p> <p>At a shuttered power plant in Massachusetts that will now be used for clean energy, Mr. Biden said he’ll take steps to expand the possible use of wind energy in the Gulf of Mexico and along the southern Atlantic coast. His three-pronged plan also includes relatively minor actions to aid low-income families with energy costs, and to help communities prepare against natural disasters.</p> <p>“I have a responsibility to act with urgency and resolve when our nation faces clear and present danger. And that’s what climate change is about,” Mr. Biden said. “It is literally — not figuratively — a clear and present danger. The health of our citizens and our communities are literally at stake.”</p>

Although the measures unveiled offer the president's agenda a minor win in the wake of several major climate-related setbacks by Capitol Hill and the Supreme Court, the response is expected to irk Democrats and environmentalists who in recent days have demanded a more wide-ranging and aggressive plan.

Mr. Biden's action came just days after centrist Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia torpedoed Democrats' hopes for a party-line spending bill to include energy and climate provisions.

William Burns, CIA chief, says China plans Taiwan takeover in next few years

"Since Congress is not acting as it should ... this is an emergency. I will look at it that way," Mr. Biden said.

The new measures are largely extensions of previous action already taken by the administration.

Rep. Ro Khanna, a leading climate advocate, said he was surprised the president did not declare an official emergency.

"He should declare an emergency. That's what gives the power of the agencies to take the actions that they need to tackle climate," the California Democrat said.

Mr. Biden signaled that there will be more action to come in the following weeks, vowing to "use the power I have as president to turn these words into formal, official government actions."

Green activists are now in a wait-and-see moment.

"All the resilience funding in the world won't save us if we don't mitigate the mounting crisis," said Evergreen Action Executive Director Jamal Raad. "The time for speeches is over, it's time for concrete action."

Mr. Biden has faced intense scrutiny of his green policies from Republicans and the oil and natural gas industry, who accuse the president of hindering domestic fossil fuel production that's led to soaring energy costs and record prices at the pump.

"Biden's solution to his gas hike? He wants you to buy an expensive electric vehicle while his climate czar John Kerry flies his private jet around the world," said Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel. "Biden and his administration are so blatantly out-of-touch with the American people — for them, the pain at the pump is the point."

The president made the announcement at the closed Brayton Point power plant in Somerset, Massachusetts.

"Bottom line: This is an opportunity for the president to come out and provide his take on where we are on climate, on the urgency, on the opportunity," a senior administration official said prior to Mr. Biden's speech.

The president has vowed in recent days to use "every power" at his disposal to tackle environmental action. Still, Mr. Biden is not willing to tap into his broad emergency powers to take the sort of aggressive directives to address climate change that his party has demanded.

White House national climate adviser Gina McCarthy dodged repeated questions about the sort of action that is to come and why Mr. Biden did not declare an official emergency.

"It was just a decision that we need to be thoughtful about this, and we want to outline actions, not just declare things," she told reporters.

Democrats and environmentalists have pushed for a wish list of climate proposals, such as strengthening vehicle emissions standards, using wartime powers under the Defense Production Act (DPA), restricting

fossil fuel imports, ending fossil fuel subsidies, preventing new fossil fuel infrastructure projects and redirecting money to clean energy.

Previously, the president invoked emergency powers to suspend U.S. tariffs on solar panel imports, and used the DPA to boost clean-energy technology, including solar panels and electric heat pumps.

Mr. Biden's green agenda has suffered repeated setbacks, including a recent Supreme Court ruling slashing the Environmental Protection Agency's authority to curb emissions from power plants. Negotiations on new climate spending broke down with Mr. Manchin over his concern with 40-year-high inflation.

On expanding offshore wind, Mr. Biden is directing the Interior Department to explore 700,000 acres in the Gulf of Mexico for new lease sales for wind turbine development, something the White House said will have the potential to power at least three million homes. The administration will seek public input on two potential areas: one off the coast of Galveston, Texas, and another off the coast of Lake Charles, Louisiana.

The president is also directing the department to expand wind energy in the Atlantic Ocean off the mid-Atlantic and southern states, and Florida's Gulf Coast.

The White House said the moves were "alleviating uncertainty" created by the Trump administration when it barred offshore lease sales for energy exploration off the coasts of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The new action enhances a federal-state partnership made last month between the administration and 11 East Coast governors to expand offshore wind.

The Department of Health and Human Services is issuing guidance to expand the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps families with household energy costs, including the purchasing of efficient air conditioners and electric heat pumps.

The administration touted itself for releasing \$385 million through the program for families to reduce cooling and heating costs, which was congressionally mandated in last year's bipartisan infrastructure law.

Mr. Biden is also allocating \$2.3 billion to communities across the country through FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program to combat natural disasters. FEMA will prioritize marginalized, overburdened and underserved populations.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Fastest growing cities face climate crisis
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/20/us-fastest-growing-cities-risk-becoming-unlivable-climate-crisis
GIST	<p>The ferocious heatwave that is gripping much of the US south and west has highlighted an uncomfortable, ominous trend – people are continuing to flock to the cities that risk becoming unlivable due to the climate crisis.</p> <p>Some of the fastest-growing cities in the US are among those being roasted by record temperatures that are baking more than 100 million Americans under some sort of extreme heat warning. More than a dozen wildfires are engulfing areas from Texas to California and Alaska, with electricity blackouts feared for places where the grid is coming under severe strain.</p> <p>San Antonio, Texas, which added more to its population than any other US city in the year to July 2021, has already had more than a dozen days over 100F this summer and hit 104F on Tuesday.</p> <p>Phoenix, Arizona, second on the population growth rankings compiled by the US census, also hit 104F on Tuesday and has suffered a record number of heat-related deaths this year. Meanwhile, Fort Worth, Texas,</p>

third on the population growth list, has a “red flag” warning in place amid temperatures that have reached 109F this week.

Cities that stretch across the “sun belt” of the southern and south-western US have in recent years enjoyed population booms, with people lured by the promise of cheap yet expansive properties, warm winters and plentiful jobs, with several large corporations shifting their bases to states with low taxes and cheaper cost of living.

But this growth is now clashing with the reality of the climate emergency, with parts of the sun belt enduring the worst drought in more than 1,000 years, record wildfires and punishing heat that is triggering a range of medical conditions, as well as excess deaths.

“There’s been this tremendous amount of growth and it’s come with a cost,” said Jesse Keenan, an expert in climate adaption at Tulane University. Keenan pointed out that since the 1990s several states have gutted housing regulations to spur development that has now left several cities, [such as in Scottsdale, Arizona](#), struggling to secure enough water to survive.

“The deregulation is really catching up with communities and they are paying that price today,” Keenan said. “We are seeing places run out of water, no proper subdivision controls to ensure there are enough trees to help lower the heat, and lots of low-density suburbs full of cars that create air pollution that only gets worse in hot weather. We’ve reached a crunch point.”

The sprawl of concrete for new housing, mostly within unspooling suburbs rather than contained in dense, walkable neighborhoods, has helped heighten temperatures in many of these growing cities. The spread of hard surfaces has also led to flash flooding, as Houston found to its cost during the devastating Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Some cities have attempted to respond to the rising temperatures by planting trees, which help cool the surrounding area, and provide emergency centers where people can cool down, but these efforts are often piecemeal and underfunded, according to Sara Meerow, an expert in urban planning at [Arizona State University](#).

“The extreme heat that cities are experiencing now is caused by a combination of climate change and the urban heat island effect,” Meerow said. “Rapid urban expansion, which means more impervious surfaces like roads and buildings and waste heat from cars and buildings, typically exacerbates the urban heat island effect, which means these cities are even hotter.”

As the US, like the rest of the world, continues to heat up, the climate crisis should become more of a factor when choosing a place to live, with retirees already starting to shun Arizona, traditionally a favored spot for older transplants, according to Keenan.

“We are looking at increased premature mortality, even increased diabetes because of dehydration, cardiac impacts and so on,” he said. “Mortgage lenders are starting to look at the risks of lending for somewhere that doesn’t have a water supply, as that’s not a good investment. Capital markets are getting wise to this stuff.

“We are seeing the limits to growth and housing affordability and the impacts of poor-quality decision making of where and how to build. We are paying the price for all that now.”

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HEADLINE	07/20 UW hospitals: sudden rise hospitalizations
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/uw-hospitals-have-more-covid-19-patients-in-them-since-winter-omicron-surge
GIST	UW Medicine says its hospitals have more COVID-19 patients in them now than it has since the winter surge.

	<p>There are 90 hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in those hospitals.</p> <p>“Hospitalizations are rising,” said Dr. John Lynch, medical director of Harborview Medical Center’s infection prevention and control. “And we’re seeing reinfections skyrocket with very little time between infections in some cases.”</p> <p>UW credits the sudden rise in hospitalizations to the latest COVID variant, BA. 5. The strain is highly transmissible and is better at evading vaccines.</p> <p>“Thankfully, it does not appear to be causing more serious illness than prior Omicron variants,” Lynch said. But, with increasing numbers, that means more people end up requiring care in clinics, emergency departments, and in hospitals. Being vaccinated and boosted continues to significantly reduce the risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Oregon health officials urge: wear masks
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/coronavirus/amid-rising-covid-cases-oregon-urges-some-areas-including-portland-to-bring-masks-back
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — Oregon health officials are urging people in 21 counties with high COVID-19 cases — including the three Portland-area counties — to return to mask wearing because the hospital system is again under extreme strain.</p> <p>While COVID-19 hospitalizations are lower than past surges, staff shortages, patients who delayed care and elevated COVID-19 infections have substantially reduced hospital systems’ capacity to care for patients, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.</p> <p>Oregon Health Authority epidemiologist Dr. Dean Sidelinger on Wednesday asked Oregonians to wear masks in indoor public spaces, particularly those in counties with high levels of spread, those at high risk of severe disease or those living with people who are at high risk.</p> <p>Using some of the strongest language during this surge, Sidelinger also suggested people reconsider summer plans to protect themselves and others during what he called “this extremely challenging time.”</p> <p>He said Central Oregon hospitals have been particularly hard-hit but that no part of the state has been spared.</p> <p>Everyone in those counties should be wearing a mask when in an indoor public space, Sidelinger said. Masks are still required in health care settings in Oregon.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Home sales market tilts in favor of buyer
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/as-home-sales-decline-economist-says-market-is-tilting-in-favor-of-buyers-cost-of-a-home-potential-home-buyers-high-prices-inflation-markets-renters-housing-prices
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (TND) — Housing prices jumped nearly 31% there year-over-year, one of the highest figures in the country.</p> <p>Now, one economist says the U.S. housing market is on the verge of a “meltdown.”</p> <p>“This was an accident waiting to happen,” Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said in a note, according to MarketWatch. “Homebuilders have been in denial about the extent of the drop in demand, despite mortgage applications falling by more than a quarter over the first half of the year, with no end in sight to the decline. Now, they are acknowledging reality.”</p>

[Fortune](#) is reporting that the housing market has entered a recession of its own with home building and sales slowing. The market is expected to start shrinking by next year.

Home sales are expected to fall even more over the next few months as the Federal Reserve continues to increase the interest rate. The next rate hike is expected to be announced in exactly one week.

According to data released by the National Association of Realtors Wednesday, [existing-home sales dropped](#) for the fifth straight month in June, down 14.2% from the same time last year. It shows that some are choosing to hold off on buying a home and waiting until the economy is in better shape.

“Many buyers are having to push off buying a home and actually, the main reason is that higher mortgage rates — in addition to much higher home prices — have made our home ownership much more costly,” said Selma Hepp, deputy chief economist for CoreLogic. “So, the monthly mortgage payment on the same home today is 50% higher than it was only six months ago or at this time last year. So, I think that has constrained a lot of people and their budgets and made it prohibitively expensive to buy a home at this time.”

Hepp says while prospective buyers are concerned about [the economic conditions](#), the outlook isn't going to improve anytime soon, so now is as good of a time as any to buy.

“If one has a good job and they plan on keeping that job and they plan on living in a home for a little while, I think this time would be as good a time as any to buy a home because mortgage rates are not likely to go down anytime soon,” Hepp said. “Home prices are likely to continue to increase — not at the same rate that we've seen over the last year but still, it could increase a little bit in the single digits over the next year — so I would think that buying now or buying year from now, it would be the same.”

Despite home sales slipping in June, the average price of a home [reached \\$416,000](#) last month. With interest rate hikes and the market cooling off a bit, sellers may soon have to adjust prices in order to meet buyers' budgets.

“I think sellers are already responding to fewer buyers out there and they are reducing the prices on their listings,” Hepp said. “Homes that are well priced, that are good homes that don't need a lot of work and they're well-prepared for sale, they still sell fast and they still sell over the asking price. It's more the homes that, you know, need a little work and imagination that are like more likely to be reduced in terms of the price.”

Hepp says right now, it's more of a buyer's market and encourages those looking to take advantage.

“The market is still tilting in favor of buyers a little bit more and so buyers do have more options out there. They don't have to compete with as many other potential buyers and they don't have to plan on spending more than the asking price,” Hepp said. “For sellers, unfortunately, because there are fewer buyers out there they cannot expect to see multiple offers or offers weigh about their asking price, so they're more likely to be getting the original asking price at which they listed their home.”

Renters will also feel the effects of the market as fewer people move into houses. Rental unit inventory is forecast to drop, pushing prices up.

[New data from Redfin](#) shows the short supply has already led to double-digit rent hikes across the country.

The National Association of Homebuilders says rising rents could become just as serious as the home supply shortage and could cut into savings that people would have spent on a down payment for a house.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Ex-Spokane deputy sues sheriff's office
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-county/former-deputy-sheriffs-office-department-pushing-case-dismissed/293-4408149e-cf21-438c-8ffa-8d7556315426

GIST	<p>SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash. — New court documents are providing a better understanding of a lawsuit against the Spokane County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>A former deputy sued, claiming a hostile work environment after he reported another deputy for racist comments. Now, the sheriff's office has filed to have the case dismissed.</p> <p>Andrew Richmond joined the Spokane County Sheriff's office in 2014. He was one of only two black officers in the department.</p> <p>When he was transferred to the Valley precinct two years later, Richmond claims several fellow officers told him to "watch out for Deputy Jeff Thurman," calling him "racist."</p> <p>Then in December of 2016, Richmond says he overheard Thurman use the n-word, asking another deputy if they were "ready to kill some (racial slur) tonight or what?"</p> <p>And a few days later, Richmond says Thurman approached him and defended his language, saying he was only "referring to inner city black people who loot and riot."</p> <p>Richmond says he wanted to come forward but "feared retaliation." When he told three superior officers what he'd witnessed, he says "they took no action."</p> <p>Records state that in 2018 Thurman was promoted to become Richmond's direct supervisor, "even though they knew about Thurman's racist conduct."</p> <p>Documents go on to say there were multiple reports of Thurman using the n-word on and off duty. KREM 2 also obtained copies of a deposition with Undersheriff Dave Ellis. When asked if he should have reported Thurman's use of the racial slur, he said yes and agreed that Thurman never should have been promoted to Richmond's supervisor, saying, "I have a lot to regret about this."</p> <p>In early 2019, Richmond says he was finally ready to file a formal complaint with Internal Affairs after Thurman referred to black citizens as "colored people" during roll call. Richmond says he was assured of confidentiality, but that it "quickly became common knowledge" that he was the complainant.</p> <p>Richmond says other officers then "excluded, shunned and ostracized" him. When he took his concerns to Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich, he was involuntarily transferred to a less-desirable isolated area on the Whitman County line.</p> <p>One month later, the sheriff fired Jeff Thurman, saying his comments and use of the n-word were unacceptable.</p> <p>The sheriff's office has never denied that Thurman used the n-word, but says some of Richmond's claims are inaccurate. New court documents on behalf of the sheriff's office say it was 'voluntary' when Richmond was transferred to the Whitman County line and that it didn't affect his salary or title.</p> <p>Records go on to say that "Richmond was never promised that his identity would be kept confidential" and that his accusations of a hostile work environment "lack evidence" and "fall outside the statute of limitations."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Cyclists, advocates voice concern: crashes
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/broke-my-back-bicyclist-says-car-took-off-after-crash-in-seattle
GIST	SEATTLE - Fourteen people died in traffic incidents so far this year in Seattle, and 21% of those incidents involved people on bikes.

Less than a week ago, a [63-year-old man died on his bike in a hit-and-run crash near the Spokane Street Bridge](#) in Seattle. Also this week, a [teenage bicyclist was killed in Parkland](#) when a car hit him at a cross-walk.

Bicyclists say they have to be aware of cars every time they are on the road.

"At the last second, they turned to make the right turn and stopped in the middle of the bike lane. I swerved. If I hadn't swerved, I would have gone through their window. [I] smashed into the back of the car, hit, spun, hit the pavement, broke my back," said Sean Delaire, detailing an incident he was involved in.

DeLaire says last month, he was involved in a crash with a car while riding his bike. The crash sent him to the hospital and he is still recovering.

However, he says the worst part is he still is waiting for answers.

"Saw me on the ground and asked if I was ok and I said, 'no I'm not.' And they took off before the paramedics got there," said Delaire.

SDOT officials say out of the 14 traffic deaths that happened in 2022, three of them were bicyclists.

"That's a huge impact. That is the ultimate loss," said Vicky Clarke, the policy director for the [Cascade Bicycle Club](#), a group that advocates for the equity and safety of bicyclists.

She says a lot still needs to happen in Seattle before the city reaches its goal of [zero traffic deaths](#) by 2030.

"It's aggressively acting, frankly. It's investing in protected infrastructure that separates vulnerable road users, people walking, people biking from fast-moving vehicles," she said.

In 2021, SDOT installed 2,500 new signs reducing speed limits to 25 miles per hour through most Seattle city streets.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Russia restarts gas flow thru key pipeline
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/21/world/ukraine-war-russia#gazprom-germany-gas
GIST	<p>Gas began flowing to Germany from Russia early Thursday through a key pipeline that was taken offline for regular maintenance 10 days ago, easing fears in Europe that it would become the latest target in the escalating economic tussle between Moscow and the West.</p> <p>The pipeline, Nord Stream 1, had been offline since July 11 for annual repairs and was set to resume operations on Thursday. But after weeks of back-and-forth, European Union officials worried that the pipeline would remain out of commission for longer as punishment for opposition to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The suspense was another reminder of the reliance of Germany, and much of the rest of Europe, on Russian energy. It prompted European Union leaders this week to urge members to cut natural gas use immediately to prepare for what could be an uncertain and unsteady supply before the winter.</p> <p>Europe's heavy dependence on Russian energy has come to haunt officials who say that Moscow is leveraging its oil and gas to influence support for Ukraine in the war.</p> <p>In the weeks leading up to the shutdown, Gazprom had already reduced flows through the pipeline to 40 percent of its capacity. In response, Berlin declared a "gas crisis" and began taking steps to encourage conservation of the fuel.</p>

On Tuesday, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said gas flows would resume after the maintenance period, albeit in limited quantities. But the European Union warned its members to prepare for Russia not to restart it and announced a proposal to drastically cut its use of natural gas immediately to prevent a major crisis. It called for hard sacrifices by the people of the world's richest group of nations.

"Russia is blackmailing us," said Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, as she introduced the plan to reduce gas consumption. "Russia is using energy as a weapon."

Maintaining a reduced flow of natural gas could be advantageous to the Russian leader, analysts said, allowing him to keep Europeans in a protracted state of uncertainty and near panic. Russia has already ceased gas deliveries through other major pipelines to Europe that cross Poland and Ukraine.

"Russia's incentive to switch the gas back on is the significant revenues," said Kaushal Ramesh, a senior analyst at Rystad Energy, a consulting firm.

Reducing the amount of gas it sends to Europe has created demand, causing fuel prices to shoot to record levels. Germany paid Russia 1.9 billion euros in May for gas and oil, 29 percent more than the same period a year ago.

But other analysts point to the real problems caused by sanctions that the West has introduced to punish Russia, complicating previously routine procedures such as maintaining the Western-built turbines that run the powerful compressors needed to ship the gas about 750 miles under the Baltic Sea.

"I think all this turbines saga means that Russia is actually trying to safeguard its flows to Europe, not to undermine them," said Katja Yafimava, a senior research fellow with the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. "It is trying to establish a sanctions-proof repair and maintenance routine."

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HEADLINE	07/21 US sending more HIMARS to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/21/world/ukraine-war-russia#ukraine-has-been-pleading-for-more-long-range-missile-launchers-the-us-is-sending-more
GIST	<p>As Russia's foreign minister made clear that Moscow's territorial ambitions extend beyond Ukraine's eastern territories, the United States said on Wednesday that it would send four more advanced multiple-rocket launch vehicles to Ukraine.</p> <p>The rocket launchers, which can unleash salvos that rival the devastating effect of an airstrike from a jet loaded with precision-guided bombs, are part of a raft of new longer-range weapons that the United States has been providing to the outgunned Ukrainian military. They underline Washington's resolve to help counter Russian military might and President Vladimir V. Putin's goal of subjugating Ukraine, a sovereign country.</p> <p>But with Russia until recently making incremental but steady gains on the battlefield and with Ukraine's Western allies struggling to keep up with Ukraine's seemingly insatiable appetite for weapons, Ukraine faces an uphill struggle to gain battlefield parity. And there are disagreements between Ukrainian and American officials over what that would take.</p> <p>Briefing reporters at the Pentagon on Wednesday, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III said the four more advanced multiple-rocket launch vehicles would bring the total number provided by the United States to 16.</p> <p>Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, said in June that Ukraine needed 300 multiple-launch rocket systems and 500 tanks, among other things, to better compete with the forces Russia can field. That is several times more than what Ukraine has been promised.</p>

Michael G. Vickers, the Pentagon's former top civilian official for counterinsurgency strategy, said this month that the Ukrainians needed at least 60, and perhaps as many as 100, [HIMARS or other multiple-launch rocket systems](#), to win the artillery battle.

Also looming over the weapons transfers is the question of how long American resolve will last amid high gasoline prices and increasing demands for national sacrifice in Europe and the United States. The Biden administration has also been hesitant to provide arms that could reach into Russian territory and, potentially, touch off a broader war.

The dozen M142 HIMARS — an acronym for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems — already provided from Pentagon stockpiles have already made a difference on the battlefield, Mr. Austin said. Ukrainian soldiers have used them to destroy Russian command-and-control centers and ammunition depots. Each M142 HIMARS truck carries six guided rockets loaded with 200 pounds of high explosives that can hit targets 50 miles away.

“That affects the tempo of the fight, and potentially creates some opportunities here,” Mr. Austin said. “There’s a lot more to be done — the HIMARS alone will not change, or win or lose a fight.”

Ukraine’s defense minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said this week Ukraine’s military needed at least 100 of the American launchers for them to “become a game changer on the battlefield.” The HIMARS and other rocket launchers already shipped to Ukraine have helped destroy about 30 Russian command stations and ammunition storage units, he said.

“This has significantly slowed down the Russian advance and dramatically decreased the intensity of their artillery shelling,” Mr. Reznikov said in an online interview on Tuesday for the Atlantic Council, a Washington research group. “So it’s working.”

As debate continues in the West over what is needed to rein in Russian forces, Russia’s foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, said on Wednesday that Russia’s ambitions in Ukraine now stretched beyond the country’s eastern territories, a departure from the Kremlin’s earlier claims that it is not waging a war of imperial expansion.

As Ukraine has stepped up attacks on Russian forces in southern Ukraine in a possible [prelude to a large-scale](#) counteroffensive, Mr. Lavrov said that Moscow was also eyeing the Kherson and Zaporizka regions of Ukraine’s south, parts of which are occupied by the Russian forces, as well as “a number of other territories.”

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HEADLINE	07/21 CIA: Putin believes US ‘will forget’ Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/21/world/ukraine-war-russia#cia-director-says-putin-believes-the-us-will-forget-about-ukraine
GIST	<p>The C.I.A. director says that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia believes that America will suffer from “attention deficit disorder” and lose interest and resolve in the Ukraine war.</p> <p>William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, said that Mr. Putin is making a bet that he can succeed in a war of attrition against the Ukrainian military. Over the rest of the year, he said, Mr. Putin believes he can “wear down the Ukrainian military” and then strangle the Ukrainian economy.</p> <p>The Russians are slowly moving forward in the grinding war in the Donbas, Mr. Burns said. They have, he said, shifted tactics to a “more comfortable way of war,” focusing on destroying Ukrainian targets.</p> <p>With such an approach, Mr. Putin believes that he can wear down both Europe and the United States, Mr. Burns said.</p>

“Putin’s view of Americans is we always suffer from attention deficit disorder and get distracted by something else,” he said during a question-and-answer session at the Aspen Security Conference in Colorado.

But Mr. Burns argued that from the beginning of the war Mr. Putin has consistently misjudged both the Ukrainians’ will to fight and Western resolve to help.

“And I think he’s wrong now,” Mr. Burns said.

Mr. Putin now relies on an ever-smaller circle of hard-line advisers, and it is not “career enhancing” for those officials to contradict the Russian president, Mr. Burns said.

It is difficult to understand Mr. Putin’s tactical choices, Mr. Burns said, without understanding his mind-set and appetite for risk.

“He is relentlessly suspicious, always attuned to vulnerabilities that he can take advantage of,” Mr. Burns said. “He is not a big believer in our better angels.”

Mikk Marran, the head of Estonia’s foreign intelligence service, said he was cautiously optimistic that Ukraine would eventually mount counteroffensives and reclaim some lost territory.

“I’m cautiously confident that Ukraine will defeat the Russian army in Ukraine sooner or later,” Mr. Marran said, speaking at a session at the Aspen conference after Mr. Burns. “It will not come easily, it will take time. And Ukraine probably might not be able to liberate all the occupied territories, but strategically speaking, Putin will not succeed in his ambition of taking Kyiv and the majority of Ukraine.”

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HEADLINE	07/21 Confidence boost for Ukraine troops
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/21/todayspaper/ukraine-russia-war.html
GIST	<p>PAVLIVKA, Ukraine — A sheepdog, padding the streets on his own, was the only sign of life in this destroyed village. Flames licked the rafters of the school and smoke poured out of a burning house several streets away after Russian artillery strikes earlier in the day.</p> <p>Amid the smoke and rubble, Pavlivka might seem like a dubious prize. But for the Ukrainian troops defending it last week, after recapturing it from Russian forces three weeks ago, it counted as a rare success when much of Ukraine, and the rest of the world, was transfixed by the fall of the last two cities in eastern Luhansk Province to overwhelming Russian firepower.</p> <p>In this small corner of the adjacent Donetsk Province, a self-assured mechanized brigade was bucking the trend.</p> <p>“I told you when I next saw you we would have liberated somewhere,” the unit’s commander said triumphantly. “Well, we have.” Like most serving officers in the Ukrainian army, the commander, a 30-year-old major who heads an anti-tank unit, asked to be identified only by his code name, Kryha, which means Ice.</p> <p>Pavlivka, just a few miles from the nearest Russian positions, remains a precarious foothold for the Ukrainians. The Russians have bombarded the village so heavily since losing it that only a small group of Ukrainian soldiers were hunkered down at the entrance. The few civilians still living there were taking cover, nowhere to be seen.</p> <p>Villages, towns and cities across eastern and southern Ukraine have suffered similar destruction as the Russian forces have made their slow, grinding advance over the last five months, pummeling Ukrainian troops with relentless artillery strikes and killing tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians.</p>

Yet the retaking of Pavlivka was a welcome turnaround for Ukrainian troops in the region, after months of being on the back foot. It also gave them a close-up view of the enemy, and what they saw gave them confidence.

“People needed to believe in themselves, see the enemy, see them captured, killed, see that they are also easily hit,” Senior Lt. Andriy Mikheichenko, deputy commander of an anti-tank missile unit, said. “Moreover, we have a lot of new recruits. These people also needed to feel success.”

Ukraine’s 53rd Brigade seized the village on June 21, he said. Through the night they negotiated the surrender of 10 Russian prisoners, including the commanding officer stationed in the village.

Kryha, who led the operation, said his troops caught the Russians off guard both with the timing and the direction of the attack.

“This was a complete surprise for them,” he said. “We surrounded them so that they could not go forward or back. They were blocked. We also blocked reinforcements who could come to their aid.”

Sitting in an underground operations rooms at his base, its walls lined with maps and video feeds of the surrounding countryside, he said the Ukrainians had planned their assault for a month before making their move, to ensure minimal casualties. The preparation paid off and they secured the village in 48 hours, with only one soldier killed and three wounded, he said.

The enemy forces consisted of about 150 men, half of them Russian marines and the other half pro-Russian forces drawn from the separatist regions in eastern Ukraine, but he said they had been complacent and not very smart.

On a visit to Pavlivka on Sunday, the commander walked through the wreckage of three Russian armored vehicles by the central square. One vehicle was reduced to a mangled jumble of metal, its turret blown off with such force that it lay 100 yards away down the street.

The central buildings were badly damaged and gutted by fire. “You see what this war is doing?” the major said.

Further along the street the Russians had used a residential compound as their headquarters. An abandoned S.U.V. marked with the Russian code sign Z stood in the courtyard amid the debris from the battle. It was here that the Russian commander was caught. “He came out and immediately raised his hands,” Kryha said.

There were brief street battles but the Russians put up little fight. “They realized that it no longer made sense,” the commander said. “They could not go on.”

The Ukrainians had not planned to get bogged down with taking prisoners, but in the end they took 10 of the Russians. The Russian commander requested to be allowed to retreat without weapons back to his side but the Ukrainians did not accept that, Kryha said.

His men showed less concern for the Ukrainians fighting alongside the Russians. Dozens of them were killed in the battle, he said, and the rest escaped.

The enemy captives were all members of a marine infantry brigade from the Russian naval base at Simferopol in Crimea, said Lieutenant Mikheichenko, who saw and talked to the prisoners.

“They were well-spoken, educated and well-equipped,” he said. “But they were all tired and lacked motivation.”

They had been fighting since February, he said, first in the city of Kherson, which Russian forces captured early in the war. Then the unit was thrown into the battle for the port city of Mariupol and fought a weekslong campaign against Ukrainian troops for control of the Azovstal steel plant. Then, without a break, the marines were sent to frontline positions at Pavlivka.

Among some of the possessions, uniforms and weapons captured by the Ukrainians was a diary belonging to one of the Russians killed in the battle. A sergeant from the city of Kemerovo in Siberia, he had written a loving farewell letter to his wife. “Maybe they felt something was coming,” Lieutenant Mikheichenko said.

The lieutenant provided photographs of some of the diary entries to The New York Times. The sergeant also wrote about an unsuccessful assault by the Russians on Mariupol and the fearful experience of coming under shell fire from Ukrainian forces. The next day he wrote: “They said there would be another assault. I don’t really want to go, but what to do?”

He also wrote about Russian soldiers looting. “Guys went to apartments and brought out big bags. Marauding in all its glory,” he wrote. “Some took only what they needed and some took everything, from an old television set to a big plasma TV, computers and expensive alcohol.”

Delivering a defeat to the Russians was of particular importance to the 53rd Brigade. At the beginning of the war in February, the brigade was defending the town of Volnovakha, which guards a strategic highway into Mariupol. But in mid-March they were forced to cede the town and retreat some 20 miles, even losing Pavlivka.

They fell back to the town of Vuhledar, a largely deserted conglomeration of battered high-rise apartment blocks where a few beleaguered residents hug the doorways and cook on wood fires in the courtyards. Without electricity or running water, they said they relied on the army for supplies and protection from thieves.

A retired miner named Volodymyr, 65, sat on a bench in the courtyard on the north side of a building, which residents have learned is better protected from Russian artillery. “I did not think to leave,” he said. “My wife is buried here and I will rest with her.”

Despite the destruction, Pavlivka had provided a needed boost, Kryha said. “We rolled back, rolled back, rolled back,” he said. “Then we stood up and stopped. We gained strength and resources. People have gained more experience. Now they realized that they really can fight.”

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HEADLINE	07/20 Russia expands territorial claims Ukraine?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/20/world/europe/putin-ukraine-invasion-russia-war.html
GIST	<p>Russia’s top diplomat said Wednesday that his country’s territorial ambitions in Ukraine might broaden, as European leaders warned their citizens to prepare for sacrifices in the face of a conflict that shows no sign of ending any time soon.</p> <p>In recent months, Russian forces have concentrated their assault on eastern Ukraine, which by all indications Russia appears determined to annex as it did Crimea in 2014. But on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov told the Russian state news agency that Moscow was now casting its gaze on a swath of Ukraine’s south, as well, specifically naming the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions as well as “a number of other territories.”</p> <p>“This is an ongoing process,” Mr. Lavrov said in an interview with RIA Novosti.</p> <p>In comments reminiscent of the justification offered for the invasion by President Vladimir V. Putin, who said Western military aggression had left him no choice, Mr. Lavrov said Ukraine’s allies were to blame if Russia expanded its military objectives.</p>

He pointed in particular to multiple rocket launchers that the United States has begun delivering to Ukraine, which have been credited with slowing the Russian advance by hitting faraway targets like munitions depots. American military officials said Wednesday that they planned to send four more of the M142 HIMARS multiple-rocket launch vehicles, as well as more of the guided rockets they fire and more guided artillery ammunition.

Russian officials have given varying — at times contradictory — accounts of their war aims. But Western officials have always scoffed at Moscow's claims that its invasion is anything less than an act of expansion — an attempt to reclaim territory lost with the fall of the Soviet Union — and on Wednesday, even as Europe baked in a heat wave for the record books, they made clear that a winter of war lay ahead, warning of energy shortages and urging solidarity.

“Putin is trying to push us around this winter, and he will dramatically fail if we stick together,” the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said Wednesday.

In a speech announcing the commencement of the full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, [Mr. Putin claimed](#) that Russia did not intend to occupy the country or “impose anything on anyone by force.” Moscow wanted simply to “demilitarize” a neighbor it viewed as a threat, he said. He cited the danger of NATO missiles stationed in Ukraine and aimed at Russia — though Ukraine is not a NATO member and no such missiles are on its soil.

That narrative began to shift as Russian forces unexpectedly stumbled in their drive to capture Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. Mr. Putin then began emphasizing that the protection of Russia's proxies in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region and their self-declared republics was the Kremlin's main aim.

Since then, city after city in the region has fallen under a relentless Russian assault that has leveled whole neighborhoods, killed thousands of civilians and sent many others fleeing for safety. Russian forces have taken over one of the Donbas's two provinces, Luhansk, and are now trying to bring the other, Donetsk, to heel as well.

But Russian victory there is not a foregone conclusion, the top American military official said Wednesday. “No, it's not lost yet,” Gen. Mark A. Milley said at a news briefing when asked about the region's prospects.

To the south, in Kherson, there were signs that Ukraine might be about to launch a broad counteroffensive. In just the past 48 hours, a critical bridge was shelled, a Russian fighter jet was shot out of the sky, ammunition depots were destroyed and a cluster of soldiers was attacked. Kherson, a port and shipbuilding center that Russia seized early in the war, is also a staging ground for Russian military operations across southern Ukraine.

An attempt to recapture the city would have immense symbolic value for the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky, but from a strategic standpoint, the timing may also be critical. A National Security Council spokesman said this week that Russia planned to [annex territories](#) it has captured, including Kherson.

“Ukraine and its Western partners may have a narrowing window of opportunity to support a Ukrainian counteroffensive into occupied Ukrainian territory before the Kremlin annexes that territory,” said the spokesman, John Kirby.

Mr. Kirby said Moscow was installing proxy officials expected to call “sham” votes on joining Russia and forcing residents to apply for Russian citizenship, and that it appeared ready to declare the ruble the official currency in occupied territory, as it did after it seized the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

“Russia is beginning to roll out a version of what you could call an annexation playbook,” Mr. Kirby said.

On Wednesday, Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, denounced his Russian counterpart's signal that Moscow may expand its military goals.

"By confessing dreams to grab more Ukrainian land," Mr. Kuleba said [on Twitter](#), "Russian foreign minister proves that Russia rejects diplomacy and focuses on war and terror. Russians want blood, not talks."

In an interview with a Ukrainian magazine, a top aide to Mr. Zelensky expressed hopes that the U.S. weapons would arrive in sufficient number to allow Ukrainian troops to prevail before Russia could cement its gains.

"It is very important for us not to enter the winter," said Mr. Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak. "After winter, when the Russians will have more time to dig in, it will certainly be more difficult."

Ukrainian officials have pushed hard for the West to provide more weaponry, especially longer-range rocket artillery. Their hope is that with that firepower, they may be able not just to block Russia's advance but also to win back lost territory.

"We all strive to liberate Ukraine from the enemy," the spokeswoman for Ukraine's southern forces, Natalia Humeniuk, said this week. "We have a single goal."

In announcing Wednesday that the United States was sending four more HIMARS rocket launchers, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III appeared at pains not to overstate their potential.

"That affects the tempo of the fight, and potentially creates some opportunities here," Mr. Austin said. "There's a lot more to be done — the HIMARS alone will not change or win or lose a fight."

And the total number committed so far — 16 from the United States, and a smaller number of similar systems from allied countries — is far less than what Ukraine and outside military experts say is needed to attain battlefield parity.

Still, Ukrainian forces on Tuesday used one of the launchers to hit the Antonivsky bridge in Kherson, an adviser to the country's interior minister said. The bridge has been the main transit route for Russian supplies coming in from Crimea. Eleven more strikes hit the bridge on Wednesday, according to the deputy head of the pro-Russia administration in Kherson.

Ukraine's armed forces also said they had blown up a Russian radar system in Kherson using projectiles fired from more than 60 miles away.

Ukraine was also pressing its case off the battlefield.

In Washington, its first lady, Olena Zelenska, appeared before Congress on Wednesday, a day after meeting with Jill Biden at the White House, to ask for more weapons to defend against "Russian hunger games."

In a rare appearance by a foreign first spouse before Congress, Ms. Zelenska showed photographs of children whose lives had been destroyed by the war. Among them was Sophia, a girl from the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, who lost her mother and her arm during the war.

"Russia is destroying our people," Ms. Zelenska said.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Threat closes Pierce Co. health department
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263655833.html

GIST	<p>In response to a threat made toward Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department workers, the agency closed its offices Wednesday and asked employees to work remotely if possible.</p> <p>In an email to The News Tribune, department spokesperson Kenny Via confirmed the organization closed its building on South D St. in Tacoma in response to threats against its employees. Via wrote, “We are working with law enforcement on this matter. You can find many of our services online. We post updates about closures on our website.”</p> <p>The nature of the threat was not revealed.</p> <p>According to Via, the department’s STD clinic, environmental health and vital records services would not be available in either in-person or virtual format. He said leadership decided to keep the building closed through Thursday.</p> <p>In addition to closing its offices, the department canceled two events scheduled for the day. Via wrote in his email that the Board of Health study session slotted for Wednesday has been scratched, and the department’s Twitter announced Wednesday morning that a COVID-19 vaccination event planned at the Asia Pacific Cultural Center would not take place.</p> <p>In a phone call, Pierce County deputy executive Dan Grimm told The News Tribune the department called and left a message for County Executive Bruce Dammeier to let him know about the threat early Wednesday morning.</p> <p>“The directive [to staff was] to not come to the office and to do work remotely if they could,” Grimm said.</p> <p>When a News Tribune reporter went to the building Wednesday around noon, a security guard asked him to leave the property. He said that patrol officers would be coming by the offices soon.</p> <p>According to Tacoma Police Department spokesperson Wendy Haddow, officers created a report on the incident and forwarded it to the Pierce County Prosecutor’s Office.</p> <p>Pierce County Council Chair Derek Young told The News Tribune in a phone call that because of the ongoing investigation, he did not want to talk about specifics details related to the incident. He did say that “the safety of our employees is of the utmost importance. Staff took the right steps in taking a potential threat seriously.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 WA state primary election: Aug 2
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/politics-government/election/article263630338.html
GIST	<p>Check your mailbox, your Washington state primary election ballot could be waiting to be filled out for the Aug. 2 election.</p> <p>Your primary election ballot will include candidates for U.S. Senate, U.S. Representative, Washington State Supreme Court, Washington Secretary of State, state legislature and other judicial offices.</p> <p>There are 1,094 total candidates running across 609 various offices in the state, according to the Washington Secretary of State.</p> <p>WHERE’S MY BALLOT? Ballots were mailed out to all registered voters on July 15.</p> <p>If you did not receive one, are not registered to vote or need to change your mailing address, your deadline is July 25 to make these changes online.</p> <p>HOW DO I VOTE?</p>

Simply follow the instructions inside your ballot, cast your votes, sign your return envelope and drop off your ballot in an official drop box or return it by mail.

Ballots must be returned to an official drop box by 8 p.m. on Aug. 2, or have a postmark no later than Aug. 2 to be counted.

Ballots are recommended to be mailed by July 26 by the U.S. Postal Service, according to a news release from the Whatcom County Auditor's Office.

Voting in person is also available at voting center locations or local election offices.

Voting closes on Aug. 2 at 8 p.m.

WHO IS ON MY BALLOT?

With a total of 1,094 candidates in the election statewide, choosing could be overwhelming.

Here are the number of candidates in each race:

- Secretary of State: 8 candidates.
- U.S. Senator: 18 candidates.
- Congressional positions: 68 candidates.
- Legislative positions: 295 candidates.
- Local Precinct Committee Officers: 874 candidates.
- Other local county races: 447 candidates.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Microsoft cuts job listings; weak economy
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/microsoft-cuts-many-open-job-listings-in-weakening-economy/
GIST	<p>Microsoft is eliminating many open jobs, including in its Azure cloud business and its security software unit, as the economy continually weakens.</p> <p>These hiring cuts will continue for the foreseeable future, Microsoft said, while declining to comment on which departments and businesses are affected. The company said it is honoring job offers that have already been made for open roles and will make some exceptions for critical jobs. It's an expansion of a hiring slowdown disclosed in May, which mostly affected its Windows, Office and Teams groups. In June, Insider also reported cuts to new head count in the security business.</p> <p>The latest slowdown, which was communicated by executives in the groups to their teams, impacts the company's cloud crown jewels — a key source of growth and investor scrutiny — as well as a newer priority area in security.</p> <p>In the past year, Microsoft brought on longtime Amazon executive Charlie Bell to bulk up its products and strategies for combating hackers and the company considered acquiring cybersecurity firm Mandiant. Now Bell's ability to bring in new talent has been pared considerably.</p> <p>"As Microsoft gets ready for the new fiscal year, it is making sure the right resources are aligned to the right opportunity," the company said in an emailed statement. "Microsoft will continue to grow head count in the year ahead, and we will add additional focus to where those resources go."</p> <p>Earlier this month, Microsoft cut less than 1% of its 180,000-person workforce, affecting groups like consulting and customer solutions, but had said it planned to finish the current fiscal year with increased head count. The moves follow others in technology. Google Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai told staff to expect a hiring slowdown for the remainder of the year. Apple Inc. is also planning to slow hiring and spending at some divisions next year, people familiar with the matter said Monday.</p>

	<p>Azure, the No. 2 infrastructure cloud provider, has been trying for years to narrow the gap with larger rival Amazon Web Services. The percentage growth rate of the Microsoft unit remains one of the most closely watched metrics in Microsoft's quarterly earnings, scheduled for release next Tuesday.</p> <p>Microsoft's new fiscal year began on July 1. The month is often a period of job cuts and adjustments to hiring, as the company reassesses where it wants to invest. Still, such a broad pullback on hiring plans is unusual and comes as fears of a recession mount, with inflation, the war in Ukraine and the lingering pandemic taking a toll.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Fire leaves apartment bldg. uninhabitable
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/fire-leaves-12-unit-apartment-building-in-renton-uninhabitable/
GIST	<p>Several people were displaced after a large fire left a 12-unit apartment building in Renton uninhabitable Wednesday afternoon, authorities said.</p> <p>Fire officials received an initial report of a car on fire in the parking lot of the Fairwood Landing Apartments on South East 177th Street, Renton firefighters said.</p> <p>The fire continued to grow, engulfing multiple cars and extending into the complex. Officials upgraded the incident to a 3-alarm fire, prompting firefighters from multiple agencies to respond.</p> <p>Renton firefighters attributed the spread of the fire to the dry and hot temperatures.</p> <p>Officials did not say if anybody was injured or the number of people displaced.</p> <p>The Red Cross is helping people affected by the fire, officials said.</p> <p>The cause of the fire is under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 SR99 tunnel significant drop in revenue
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/state-route-99-tunnel-seattle-revenue/281-3e3c901e-c1b8-4ed9-82ba-50fab497e59f
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The State Route 99 tunnel in Seattle is seeing a significant drop in revenue.</p> <p>"We're seeing a permanent reduction in revenues that ranges from 16 percent on up to over 30 percent," Jason Richter, deputy treasurer for debt management with the Office of the State Treasurer, told the state's Transportation Commission on Wednesday.</p> <p>Richter said there has been a "permanent shift" in the use of the corridor, which have "substantial effect" on the state's revenues.</p> <p>There have been insufficient revenues every year during the projection period, according to Richter. According to a report, presented to the Commission, net revenue will be down \$1.2 million. It only continues to decline into the future.</p> <p>"As you can see we have a sea of red," he said.</p> <p>Richter said this could mean additional toll increases. However, he said he's "suspicious" that even toll increases won't be sufficient to cover the entirety of the revenue decline, considering the shortfall in many of the years is roughly one-third of the revenue coming in.</p>

	<p>"I just don't think a 30 percent toll increase is realistic in any scenario," Richter said, adding there is likely going to be a need for some legislative assistance, some toll increases, "basically all of the potential actions will be needed to remedy this particular problem."</p> <p>The project that replaced the Seattle viaduct cost more than \$3 billion, following years of delays and cost overruns.</p> <p>When tolling went into effect, rates ranged from \$1 to \$2.25 for those with a Good to Go! pass. Rates increased, now ranging from \$1.50 to \$2.70 for drivers with a Good to Go! pass.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 WA not eyeing additional Covid restrictions
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/inslee-says-state-is-not-looking-bringing-back-masks/IGZLMEBBJZF4VONXAJIBA2IYJM/
GIST	<p>King County officials are actively discussing reinstating a mask mandate, but the governor's office says the state is not looking at additional restrictions.</p> <p>Fourteen Washington state counties are currently considered high risk for COVID, and local hospitals report they're running out of room. Health care professionals blame the lack of beds not just on the pandemic, but an unprecedented staffing crisis. Monday, the Washington State Hospital Association asked the state for money to increase emergency staffing. KIRO 7's Lauren Donovan asked Gov. Inslee if he plans to foot the bill.</p> <p>"Well, I don't have immediate dollars in my pocket. This takes appropriation by the state legislators," said Inslee. "I would be very open to additional investments in our health care system."</p> <p>Inslee says his administration has already invested \$80 million last year to help in that regard.</p> <p>"Bottom line, we don't have nurses," said Inslee. "I think the best solution to that is to build capacity in the skilled nursing centers so that they can have a place to discharge their people, and to do that will take additional funds."</p> <p>Right before the Fourth of July holiday weekend, Gov. Inslee announced a new directive in a statement: <i>"All new employees to be fully up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccination prior to starting work, including any recommended boosters. This change will take effect at the conclusion of rulemaking, sometime in the fall of 2022."</i></p> <p>According to Gov. Inslee, you have 52%-92% greater protection against hospitalization with a booster than if you're just relying on an initial vaccination.</p> <p>"As a manager, as an employer, we intend to keep our staff safe by using the vaccine even after the state of emergency has lifted," said Inslee.</p> <p>The governor anticipates to debate that decision with labor groups representing state workers over the next coming weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Seattle mayor selects new director for OPA
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/gino-betts-named-next-director-seattles-office-police-accountability/XHB6AE564BESZEPOA2MB47QJQI/
GIST	SEATTLE — Following a nationwide search, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell has nominated Gino Betts as the next director of the city's Office of Police Accountability.

Betts was previously an assistant state's attorney in Chicago, where he prosecuted violent offenders for the Cook County state's attorney's office, and an attorney with Chicago's police accountability agency.

"We cannot have safety without accountability, and our Office of Police Accountability is a core component of our efforts to ensure a trusted, effective and accountable Seattle Police Department," said Harrell. "After a robust national search, Gino was a clear standout for his commitment to fairness and justice, belief in continuous learning and improvement, and proven experience driving real progress in this critical area."

Betts will be the fifth director of the OPA since it was created 23 years ago.

The office investigates complaints and allegations of police misconduct and makes recommendations to the chief of police. These investigations are carried out by Seattle police sergeants as well as civilian investigators.

While OPA is administratively within the Seattle Police Department, it is a physically and operationally independent agency.

As a part of the selection process, Betts spoke at a [public forum last month](#) where he said growing public confidence in police accountability is one of his main priorities.

He is also an advocate for sharing body cam video as soon as possible when police action is called into question.

"I'm honored to join the Office of Police Accountability and to advance efforts to build transparency and community trust in the Seattle Police Department," said Betts. "This is a new opportunity to bring a fresh lens and deliberate approach to these challenging issues — moving forward by engaging community through thorough investigations driven by honesty, transparency and a dedication to the truth."

The city council's Public Safety and Human Services Committee, as well as the full council, still has to confirm Betts into the role, but he is set to begin working on Aug. 1.

He plans to begin his tenure with a series of community meetings to introduce himself to the people of Seattle.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Tacoma clears camp near courthouse
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/tacoma-clears-camp-near-county-courthouse-amid-concerns-about-crime-from-the-site
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — The city of Tacoma on Wednesday started removing another homeless encampment, citing health and safety concerns the site has generated.</p> <p>Data provided by officials show that calls for service to the camp, which is located at Tacoma Avenue S. and S. 7th Street and just down the road from the Pierce County Courthouse and sheriff's department headquarters, have increased dramatically in the last year.</p> <p>The Crime Analysis Unit in the Tacoma Police Department reported 217 calls for service at the location between January and June 2021, with 306 calls for service for the same timeframe this year.</p> <p>Notably, calls for service in June 2022 increased 133 percent from 30 calls in June 2021 to 70 calls in June 2022.</p> <p>Total calls for service from surrounding area such as 612 Tacoma Avenue S. went from 11 calls in 2020-2021 to 69 calls in 2021-2022, an increase of 527.3 percent.</p>

For the address of 622 Tacoma Ave S went from 11 calls in 2020-2021 to 49 calls in 2021-2022, an increase of 345.5 percent.

The camp's primary location reported a 388.5 percent increase in crime reports, according to the data.

"The last two years have been a nightmare," said David Foster, a nearby building owner, adding that he has also grappled with graffiti and vandalism. "I have had to literally clean up piles of human waste from my property."

The situation has resulted in a hit to his bottom line.

"I've lost more than a few residential tenants," Foster said. "I lost a really great commercial tenant (that was) a neighborhood bar that was a real asset to the neighborhood. They just couldn't deal with all the crime and the owner was actually assaulted."

While he was relieved to see the camp being cleared, Foster does have concerns about the city's plan to find a better place for people to live.

"I haven't seen the city seriously considering some real solutions," Foster said. "Like for example, sanctioned camp sites that are located in appropriate areas where some safety can be created, where some services can be provided."

Others have similar concerns, like Ed Jacobs, a local chaplain, who was onsite Wednesday trying to do outreach work and help the homeless still there.

"They're destroying their homes right now. It's a situation that, people ask what's the answer and we probably have 500 answers that are needed," Jacobs said. "One of the best alternatives is an encampment that is about 35 people in size and is managed so that they can have their tent (and) they can create community."

The city removed a camp that some in the area said was generating crime and waste.

One camper suggested the city's response has been inadequate.

"They'll give us little papers, but there's lists and lines, years long," one of the campers said about the shelter services that have been offered, adding that the residents will figure out somewhere to go. "There's answers, but the answers aren't immediate."

As encampment removals become more common, the goal of quickly finding enough shelter and the right kind of shelter has been an ongoing debate in Tacoma.

Not too far away on Martin Luther King Jr. Way, construction work is almost done on a project to help move the unsheltered into more permanent housing.

The city is working with the R.I.S.E. Center and Executive Director Gerald Daniels on placing shelter and services like mental health and substance abuse treatment, across from the center.

"Those street sweeps happen and they should not happen," Daniels said. "There has to be a plan before you move them. I think it takes more patience from the city, rather than saying, 'Let's just sweep,' rather than sitting still and figuring out a plan for the next step."

Asked if he thinks shelter options in Tacoma are improving, Daniels said: "I think we still got a ways to go. We're on the first steps. We're on the right steps, but there's still a long way to go."

In response to the cleanup, city officials said in a written statement that they are aware of the issues.

	“The City of Tacoma recognizes the complexity and impact that homelessness and encampments have on communities,” the statement said. “Encampments pose safety and health concerns as they create concerns about human waste, garbage, exposure to communicable diseases, exposure to violence and other human health concerns.”
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HEADLINE	07/21 EU imposes more sanctions on Russia
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-technology-global-trade-moscow-ursula-von-der-leyen-1782924eb8e8499035cb9cf9ff16a32e
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union imposed more sanctions on Russia on Thursday over the war in Ukraine after the bloc’s member states backed a series of measures that would include gold imports and tighten export controls on some high-technology goods.</p> <p>European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said that the “reinforced, prolonged EU sanctions against the Kremlin” send “a strong signal to Moscow: we will keep the pressure high for as long as it takes.”</p> <p>The details of the sanctions were still unclear since they still need to be posted in the EU’s official journal.</p> <p>EU officials have been seeking all week to tighten the extensive package of sanctions on Russia and looking at ways to add a ban on gold exports in hopes that the measures might finally start to have a decisive impact on the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said Monday that at the moment “the most important thing is a ban on Russian gold,” which is Moscow’s second-largest export industry after energy.</p> <p>The Group of Seven leading industrial nations last month already committed to a gold ban, arguing the Russia has used its gold to back up its currency to circumvent the impact of several rounds of sanctions that nations around the world had already imposed on Moscow for its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>On top of the restrictive measures, the EU also decided to grant 500 million euros to boost military aid to Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Symptoms linked to risk for long Covid
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/scientists-identify-symptoms-associated-increased-144524070.html
GIST	<p>From the start of the pandemic, patients and doctors alike have been frustrated by the sizable minority of coronavirus infections that turn into long COVID, a perplexing collection of lingering and often disabling symptoms that persist weeks, months or years after the initial infection subsides.</p> <p>The condition has been reported in both children and adults; in those who had preexisting conditions and those in robust health; in patients hospitalized with COVID-19 and those who experienced only mild symptoms during their initial infection.</p> <p>A new study from researchers at USC offers some insights into the prevalence of long COVID and suggests some early clues for who might be more likely to develop long-term symptoms.</p> <p>The study, published this month in Scientific Reports, found that 23% of people who had coronavirus infections between March 2020 and March 2021 were still reporting symptoms up to 12 weeks later.</p> <p>Researchers recruited roughly 8,000 people, some infected and some not, to answer biweekly questions about their overall health and COVID-19 status. By the end of the yearlong survey period, they had a sample of 308 people who had gotten the disease at some point in the year.</p>

After filtering out respondents with symptoms such as headache and fatigue prior to infection as a result of unrelated conditions like seasonal allergies, the team found that nearly 1 in 4 COVID-19 sufferers were still grappling with symptoms 12 weeks after becoming infected.

“These people are not able to do necessarily all the activities they would want to do, not able to fully work and take care of their families,” said [Eileen Crimmins](#), a demographer at USC’s Leonard Davis School of Gerontology and a coauthor of the study.

“That’s an aspect of this disease that needs to be recognized, because it’s not really as benign as some people think,” she said. “Even people who have relatively few symptoms to start with can end up with long COVID.”

Determining who is at greater risk for long COVID has proved a challenge to demographers and healthcare providers.

Several previous studies have identified [women as being at greater risk](#). But the USC study found no relationship in its sample between long COVID and [age](#), gender, race or preexisting health conditions including cancer, diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

It did note a higher risk in patients who had obesity prior to infection. And it also spotted some associations between specific symptoms people experienced during their initial infection and the likelihood of developing long COVID. Patients who reported sore throats, headaches and, intriguingly, hair loss after testing positive were more likely to have lingering symptoms months later.

“Our assumption is that that hair loss reflects extreme stress, potentially a reaction to a high fever or medications,” Crimmins said. “So it’s probably some indication of how severe the illness was.”

Because it covered only the first year of the pandemic, the study doesn’t account for two major developments: vaccines and variants. None of the COVID-19 patients in the sample were eligible for vaccines during the study period, and all were infected before the Alpha variant from the U.K reached U.S. shores.

While the study’s 308 respondents were representative of the population, no snapshot of a few hundred people can tell the whole story of the [roughly 200 million people](#) in the U.S. who have had the virus, according to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“The authors made a commendable effort to identify factors associated with long COVID,” said [Dr. Alain Lekoubou Looti](#), a neurologist at Penn State University who was not involved with the study. “However, these factors may need to be confirmed in larger samples.”

The most common long COVID symptoms reported were headache, nasal congestion, abdominal pain, fatigue and diarrhea. But the study did not address many of the symptoms people living with long COVID describe as the most debilitating, said Hannah Davis, a co-founder of the [Patient-Led Research Collaborative](#), a research group that focuses on the condition.

“We need work like this, but this work also indicates they aren’t very familiar with what long COVID is,” Davis said. “The list of symptoms are predominantly acute COVID symptoms and don’t include the most common symptoms of post-exertional malaise, cognitive dysfunction, memory loss, sensorimotor symptoms and others.”

Defining long COVID presents a challenge to those attempting to track or treat it. COVID-19 is a chimerical beast — symptoms evolve [as the condition drags on](#), and can vary widely among patients.

The fluidity of long COVID makes it hard to gauge its prevalence. Various studies have placed the percentage of people reporting enduring symptoms 12 weeks after their initial infection at anywhere from [3%](#) to [50%](#).

"We need a universal case definition before we can really understand the prevalence of long COVID. Right now, the definition varies wildly across studies, leading to a big range in prevalence estimates," said [Jana Hirschtick](#), an epidemiologist with the University of Michigan's School of Public Health. "After all this time, we still don't have a clear picture of who is at greatest risk."

The absence of strict diagnostic criteria is also a major issue for patients attempting to seek treatment. At the moment, long COVID is considered an "exclusionary diagnosis," meaning one that is given only after all other valid possibilities have been ruled out, said [Melissa Pinto](#), an associate professor of nursing at UC Irvine who studies the condition. In the U.S., that can mean a long and expensive process of submitting to various tests and specialists.

For many long COVID patients, 12 weeks is just the beginning of a months- or years-long ordeal.

"I've known people that have had this now for 2½ years," Pinto said. "There's no safety net, really, for these individuals."

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HEADLINE	07/20 Border Patrol pushes back DHS claim
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/politics/border-patrol-pushes-back-mayorkas-claim-southern-border-secure-they-liars
GIST	<p>Multiple Border Patrol agents are pushing back against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas' claim that the southern border is "secure" -- just as agents on the frontlines of the historic migrant crisis are struggling to cope with the overwhelming numbers facing them.</p> <p>There were more than 207,000 migrant encounters in June alone, the fourth month in a row where the number of encounters breached the 200,000 mark. But Mayorkas, speaking at the Aspen Security Forum on Tuesday, dismissed claims about the border not being secure.</p> <p>"Look, the border is secure," he said. "We are working to make the border more secure. That has been a historic challenge."</p> <p>He then faulted lawmakers who have said they won't commit to broad immigration legislation until the situation is addressed.</p> <p>"I have said to a number of legislators who expressed to me that we need to address the challenge at the border before they pass legislation and I take issue with the math of holding the solution hostage until the problem is resolved," he said.</p> <p>"There is work to be done," he said before adding that "safe and secure are two different words."</p> <p>"There are smugglers that operate on the Mexican side of the border and placing one's life in their hands is not safe," he said.</p> <p>But Border Patrol agents who spoke to Fox News Digital did not share Mayorkas' assessment. "Hundreds of thousands crossing every month is not the definition of secure," one agent said. "They are liars and anyone who believes them are fools."</p> <p>Brandon Judd, President of the National Border Patrol Council (NBPC) also disputed that the border is secure, pointing to not only the drug flows into the U.S., but also the number of migrants that get past agents.</p> <p>A high-level CBP source told Fox News last month that there have been 440,000 known gotaways since the fiscal year began in October -- with over 50,000 in May. Combined with the 400,000 known gotaways</p>

since the beginning of FY 2021, that means that more than 800,000 illegal immigrants have gotten past agents since October 2020.

"As bad as the apprehension numbers are, and they are beyond bad, the scariest part of border security is the gotaways and the amount of drugs that are coming into the country," Judd told Fox News Digital.

"Secretary Mayorkas knows the cartels use illegal border crossers to facilitate their higher value contraband including criminal aliens and fentanyl."

"Secretary Mayorkas knows we have the least secure border in our history as evidenced by nearly one million known gotaways and over 100,000 overdose deaths from narcotics coming across our southwest border," he said. "There are easy solutions but based upon the evidence and a refusal to implement programs to secure the border it is clear this Administration including Secretary Mayorkas clearly does not care about the American people."

Another Border Patrol source told Fox News Digital that Mayorkas is telling "bold face lies" to the American people.

"They're using issues like poverty, crime and climate change as reasons for asylum but those do not meet the legal standard of the law," they said, before saying the majority of asylum claims are "absolutely bogus."

"Mayorkas, [Border Patrol Chief Raul] Ortiz and [President] Biden are failures that do not have the support of agents and many command staff, they all have violated their 'oath' of office to defend the laws and Constitution and should be removed," the source said.

The Biden administration has focused its response to the crisis on targeting "root causes" of the crisis like corruption and poverty in Central America, as well as implementing what it calls "safe and legal pathways" for immigration and claiming asylum.

But Republicans and some border officials have accused the administration of exacerbating the crisis by making it easier for many migrants to be released into the U.S., narrowing interior immigration enforcement and stopping construction of the [border wall](#).

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HEADLINE	07/20 Parents still desperate for baby formula
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/baby-formula-shortage-fda/
GIST	<p>Five months since the baby formula crisis began, parents like Julie Morgan are still desperate. Morgan's 8-month-old daughter, Taytum, is lactose intolerant and needs hypoallergenic formula, which is still hard to find.</p> <p>"It's almost impossible today," Morgan told CBS News.</p> <p>Morgan did not think the shortage would last this long.</p> <p>"I thought I was in the clear because I had like two months' supply," she said.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the Food and Drug Administration touted progress in addressing the crisis, but the latest data shows nearly one-third of powdered formula products are still out of stock nationwide, according to market research company IRI. Four companies are responsible for supplying about 90% of domestic baby formula in the U.S.</p> <p>The FDA also announced an external review into the agency's handling of the crisis.</p> <p>"We're working 24/7 on this to make sure that we have adequate supply," FDA Commissioner Robert Califf said.</p>

	<p>Under Operation Fly Formula, the U.S. has called on international companies to send tens of millions of cans of baby formula. Health & Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said it recently cleared the way to give those suppliers a permanent place in the U.S. market.</p> <p>"We also want to change the policy here," Becerra said. "The industry allowed themselves to be short and we can't afford that, especially with specialty formula."</p> <p>The shortage began when one of the major U.S. suppliers, Abbott, closed its largest plant in February due to contamination. The Michigan facility is back up and running, but it could be at least two months before families get the relief they need to keep their children fed.</p> <p>Sarah Chamberlin's daughter, Izzy, has a rare disorder and relies on specialty formula for 70% of her nutrition. She said it has also been a scramble to find formula.</p> <p>"We have less formula than we did two months ago," Chamberlin told CBS News.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Hourly workers: 48% no emergency savings
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/saving-money-inflation-hourly-worker-minimum-wage/
GIST	<p>As raging inflation forces millions of Americans to cut their spending, one group is being stretched especially thin.</p> <p>Nearly half of all hourly workers in the U.S. have been unable to save even a dime to guard against financial emergencies, according to a new survey of 3,000 employees by Branch. That figure, 48%, is up 7% from last year, a sign the higher cost of food, rent, gas and other staples is taking a severe toll on hourly workers. More than 80% of respondents said they had less than \$500 tucked away for emergencies.</p> <p>Personal finance experts typically recommend that people have at least three months' worth of income saved to tide them over in the event of a job loss, health problem or other unplanned situation that crimps their cash flow.</p> <p>"Even with higher wages, rising costs of essential expenses have created additional obstacles and setbacks for hourly workers looking to establish greater financial security," Branch CEO Atif Siddiqi said in a statement.</p> <p>Hourly workers cited rising energy, food and housing costs as the main factors affecting their finances, according to Branch, a provider of workforce payment tools. Asked how they would use a \$1,000 bonus, over 40% said they would pay down debt.</p> <p>Not surprisingly, soaring consumer prices are taking a particular toll on the lowest-paid earners, including those earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Factoring in the latest inflation data, the current value of the U.S. minimum wage in real dollars is at its lowest level since February 1956, when the base U.S. wage was 75 cents (or \$7.19 in June 2022 dollars), according to the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute.</p> <p>Workers who earn the federal minimum today also earn roughly 27% less in inflation-adjusted terms than their counterparts did in July 2009, the last time Congress enacted an increase.</p> <p>Across the U.S., minimum-wage workers in 20 states continue to earn \$7.25 an hour — a pay rate that is below the poverty line of \$8.38 for families of two or more where one person is working.</p> <p>According to Oxfam, nearly 52 million workers — approximately a third of the U.S. workforce — earn less than \$15 an hour, which equates to roughly \$31,000 per year.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Economic toll of severe heat waves
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/heat-wave-economic-impact/
GIST	<p>Western Europe is reeling from the hottest temperatures on record as a third of the U.S. buckles down for a heat wave of its own.</p> <p>Disastrous heat waves are becoming increasingly more common with global warming — killing people, damaging infrastructure and straining energy supplies. A growing body of research shows that extreme heat has long-lasting effects not just on population health but on local economies. With climate change making heat waves more severe and more frequent, here are some of the effects of these temperature shocks.</p> <p>Melting infrastructure</p> <p>Heat waves in temperate countries like the United Kingdom can have disastrous effects on manmade constructs that are not designed to withstand extreme heat. Less than 5% of households in the typically cool nation have air conditioning, with builders more often concerned about retaining heat rather than repelling it.</p> <p>In Luton, England, a city 30 miles north of London, record-high temperatures melted an airport runway, shutting down flights for several hours. Last year's scorching heat dome in the Pacific Northwest, another typically temperate region, cracked roads, while low air quality led a public pool to shutter. The excessive heat melted power cables in Portland, leading the city to shut down rail service.</p> <p>Elsewhere, high heat has buckled the steel tracks of railroads, slowing down passenger trains and freight shipments.</p> <p>Strained health systems</p> <p>Heat takes a massive toll on human bodies, exponentially increasing the risk of death from heatstroke or other causes.</p> <p>During Europe's 2003 heat wave, 70,000 people died, setting a grim record for the deadliest climate-related event in a developed country, according to Brian Stone, a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology. During the heat dome in the Pacific Northwest last year, 1,000 people died who otherwise wouldn't have, and the number of people coming to hospitals with heat-related illnesses increased by a factor of 69, said Kristie Ebi, professor at the Center for Health and the Global Environment at the University of Washington.</p> <p>"How do you cost years of life lost?" she said, which is incalculable for the families of people who've died. Actuaries and government agencies however put the value of an American life at about \$10 million, bringing the economic toll of a heat wave quickly into the billions even before factoring in impacts on health, work output and food systems.</p> <p>The consequences for hospitals can strain already-overtaxed systems, Ebi said. One Seattle hospital nearly ran out of ice in its efforts to aid patients suffering from heatstroke. Another had to shut down its operating room for several days because they weren't able to cool it down sufficiently to perform surgery safely.</p> <p>Output reduction</p> <p>Even when people avoid the worst health effects of heat, it takes a toll on their productivity. One recent study found that extreme summer heat reduced states' economic output, with states' GDP falling by 0.25% for every 1 degree Fahrenheit in above-average summer temperatures.</p> <p>"When it gets very hot, people don't work that much," noted Ebi. However, the impact is different for different classes of workers, she said.</p>

"People who have a salary will slow down. People who are paid by the piece have an economic incentive to keep working, and they may keep working until they harm themselves," she said. That's particularly troublesome for outdoor workers like agricultural workers, delivery people or construction laborers.

Heat can even take a toll on a worker's future earnings, with studies showing that students learn less in schools on [high-temperature days](#) and that fetuses exposed to high heat in utero have lower earnings as adults.

Reduced agricultural productivity

Crops, like human bodies, thrive within a fairly narrow range of temperatures. While a small temperature increase can lead some plants to produce more, heat over 90 degrees Fahrenheit leads to a [sharp drop in yields](#) for staple grains like corn, soybeans and cotton.

One recent study estimated the effects of a global temperature increase of 2 degrees Celsius, which the world is projected to hit in the coming decades. With that level of warming, agricultural profitability for the Eastern U.S. drops by 60%, found the [study](#) by University of Arizona professor [Derek Lemoine](#).

That's doubly problematic when combined with drought, which often accompanies high temperatures. Nearly half of Europe is currently under a drought warning, which the European Commission said could lead to crop [shortages](#).

Problems for shipping and industry

This week's heat wave comes amid historically low water levels in Europe's rivers, which are critically important for freight.

Water levels on the Rhine, a major thoroughfare that links industrial regions in Switzerland, Germany and Denmark, are at their lowest since at least 1970, Cedric Gemehl of Gavekal Research said in a note. That means "greatly reduced freight traffic, bottlenecks and higher delivery charges," Gemehl wrote. He noted that a less-severe fall in 2018 led to a 15% drop in pharmaceutical and chemical output in the second half of that year.

Less water in the river means less hydroelectric power, which is running well below its typical levels in France, Italy and Spain, Gemehl said. Likewise for industrial output as well as Europe's nuclear plants, both of which rely heavily on river water for cooling.

While each of these issues is potentially manageable on its own, they are coming on top of existing supply snags and a looming energy crisis, worsening this year's outlook.

"[T]he effects of the heat wave are hitting the European economy at the worst possible time, compounding existing supply shortages and rendering Europe's energy equation even more precarious," Gemehl said. "In economic terms, Europe's current hot spell is anything but sunny."

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HEADLINE	07/20 Iran leader lauds Putin starting Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-ukraine-war-iran-vladimir-putin-khamenei-nato-us/
GIST	<p><i>Tehran, Iran</i> — Iran's supreme leader offered his staunch support Tuesday to Russian President Vladimir Putin for his country's war in Ukraine. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei demonized the U.S.-led NATO alliance and said the West was really working to prevent the growth of an "independent and strong" Russia.</p> <p>A report published on the supreme leader's website said Khamenei had told Putin that if he hadn't sent troops into Ukraine, Russia would have faced an attack from NATO instead. The claim almost precisely echoed the defense for the invasion offered by Putin himself in the early days of the war, and it highlighted the deepening ties between two nations facing a barrage of Western sanctions.</p>

The U.S. and its NATO partners have poured more troops into Eastern European countries, close to Russia's borders, and sent shipment after shipment of weapons into Ukraine to help its vastly out-manned and out-gunned military counter Putin's attack.

Iran hosted Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday for talks on a range of regional issues. Putin also met Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

"War is a violent and difficult issue, and the Islamic Republic is in no way happy that civilians get caught up in it, but concerning Ukraine, had you not taken the initiative, the other side would have taken the initiative and caused the war," Khamenei told Putin, according to the account by the supreme leader's office. "NATO is a dangerous entity. The West is totally opposed to a strong, independent Russia. If the way is opened for NATO, it will recognize no limits. If it hadn't been stopped in Ukraine, it would have later started a similar war in Crimea."

As both countries' economies strain under the weight of unprecedented sanctions imposed by the West, the Iranian leader stressed to Putin "Iran and Russia's need for increasing mutual cooperation," which he said, "should reach a peak in this period."

While Russia's attack on neighboring Ukraine has seen the U.S. and its allies heap sanctions on Moscow, Iran's economy has struggled to cope with penalties imposed over its support for armed militant groups from Yemen to Lebanon and its nuclear program.

The Islamic Republic has steadily backed away from commitments it made to the global community in the 2015 nuclear agreement since former President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of it in 2018, imposing a litany of new sanctions against the country in what his administration dubbed a policy of "maximum pressure."

The move infuriated Tehran and frustrated American allies that worked for years to help negotiate the pact, which was aimed at ensuring that Iran could not gain the technical capacity to build a nuclear weapon in exchange for relief from sanctions.

Talks aimed at drawing Iran back into the agreement have [stumbled along for years](#) since then, but in the meantime, Iran — always pointing at Washington as the initial deal-breaker — has forged ahead with advances in its uranium enrichment program.

A senior advisor to Khamenei [claimed earlier this week](#) that Iran "has the technical ability to build a nuclear bomb," with a supply of uranium now enriched to 60% — a short technological step away from the 90% required to build a nuclear weapon. Other Iranian officials have since stressed that Iran's official policy of prohibiting the manufacture or use of nuclear, or any other weapons of mass destruction, has not changed.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Gun violence hospital tab: \$1B/year
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gun-violence-medical-cost-1-billion-a-year/
GIST	<p>Along with the incalculable toll on victims and their families, gun violence in the U.S. also exacts another heavy cost: More than \$1 billion a year in medical bills.</p> <p>That figure only accounts for the initial health costs of hospital care for people who are shot, according to a report released by the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee ahead of a Wednesday hearing on the economic impact of gun violence.</p> <p>"The costs are born most directly by victims and their families," Dr. Chethan Sathya, a pediatric trauma surgeon at the Cohen Children's Medical Center in New York City, said in the hearing.</p>

For victims of fatal firearm injuries, medical costs totaled \$290 million in 2020 and cost an average of \$9,000 per patient, with much of the cost paid for by public health insurance providers such as Medicaid, according to the panel, citing [figures](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"It's just devastating"

"Treating gunshot injuries is way more expensive than any other type of injury," said the physician, also a National Institutes of Health-funded firearm injury prevention researcher. "A bullet wound versus a stab wound, versus a car accident. It's just devastating, the amount of damage that one bullet causes, especially in a child whose organs are all next to each other, very close to one another, cannot be described."

Every year, firearms-related injuries cause 30,000 initial in-patient hospital stays, each of which result in average treatment costs of \$31,000, and 50,000 initial ER visits that run an average of \$1,500 a piece, according to the report, which cited a [study](#) by the Government Accountability Office.

Each day, more than 300 Americans are shot, and more than 110 are killed by gunfire. For survivors, health care bills typically surge more than \$25,000 in the first month following a shooting, and then averages nearly \$2,500 a month for a full year after the injury, the committee [found](#).

Gun violence also adds more than \$3 billion in annual costs to already strained school budgets, which now must cover increased security measures in response to mass shootings targeting children and teenagers, according to the JEC findings.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Army to miss recruiting goals by 20,000?
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/army-recruiting-goals-projected-missed-2022-20223/
GIST	<p>The Army is forecasted to fall short of its recruiting and retention goals over the next two years by tens of thousands of troops, top Army leaders warned in a memo released Wednesday.</p> <p>Army Secretary Christine Wormuth and chief of staff of the Army Gen. James McConville wrote the Army will end the fiscal year with 466,400 soldiers, close to 20,000 fewer than the budgeted target, and could further decrease to between 445,000-452,000 by the end of the 2023 fiscal year.</p> <p>The memo from Wormuth and McConville cited the post-COVID labor market, competition with the private sector, and a declining number of young people who are qualified and want to serve.</p> <p>In a hearing on Capitol Hill Tuesday, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Joseph Martin said that recruiting "motivated, fit and academically proficient" young men and women is a challenge.</p> <p>"Only 23% of military-age men and women in the United States are qualified to serve and that does not even reflect propensity," Martin told lawmakers.</p> <p>The memo titled "A Call to Service to Overcome Recruiting and Retention Challenges" outlined ways the Army will try to intensify its recruiting efforts.</p> <p>The initiatives include raising enlistment bonuses to up to \$50,000, providing \$35,000 bonuses to recruits willing to ship within 45 days, and expanding station of choice options.</p> <p>"We are pursuing every approach to recruit talent including, modifying our marketing strategy, providing bonuses, and considering soldier location preferences through our options programs, and we're also working addressing fitness and training needs within the recruiting pool," Martin said Tuesday.</p> <p>Earlier this summer, the Army removed its high school and GED requirement only to walk that decision back and reinstate the requirement a week later.</p>

	Asked on Tuesday if the Army will have to make structural changes because of recruiting problems, Martin said the Army doesn't have to do that immediately, but if the numbers don't stop declining then that could be a possibility in the future.
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HEADLINE	07/20 CIA: Russia, Iran ties suffer from 'limits'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cia-director-russia-iran-ties-suffer-lack-of-trust/
GIST	<p>CIA Director William Burns downplayed the utility of Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent visit to Iran on Wednesday, saying an alliance between the two countries would be limited by their historic rivalry in energy exports and an overall lack of trust.</p> <p>"I think beneath the images that that we all saw, the reality is that Russians and Iranians need each other right now," Burns said. "Both federally sanctioned countries, both looking to break out of political isolation as well — but if they need each other, they don't really trust each other, in the sense that they're energy rivals and historical competitors."</p> <p>Burns, who spoke at the annual Aspen Security Forum in Aspen, Colorado, also acknowledged a declassified U.S. intelligence assessment cited last week by national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who announced during a White House briefing that Russia was preparing to buy armed drones from the Iranian government.</p> <p>Moscow's outreach to Tehran for military support was "a reflection, in some ways, of the deficiencies of Russia's defense industry today," Burns said, noting Russia had suffered significant losses in its war against Ukraine.</p> <p>Burns, who, over a decades-long career as a diplomat, served as U.S. ambassador to Russia and, as deputy secretary of state, helped pave the way for the 2015 nuclear deal with the Iranians, acknowledged military cooperation between the two countries was "troubling" but was skeptical about its long-term viability.</p> <p>"There are limits, I think, to the ways in which they're going to be able to help one another right now," he said.</p> <p>Burns' comments followed a rare visit by the Russian leader this week to the Iranian capital, where Putin held talks with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi, as well as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Khamenei later criticized the West for its hostility toward an "independent and strong" Russia and accused NATO of wanting to wage war on Moscow.</p> <p>In a later exchange on Wednesday, Burns said Putin's "bet" in Ukraine was that he would be successful in a war of attrition, wearing down the Ukrainian military and economy and waiting out waning resilience from Europe and the United States, even as his own military's losses mounted. He said assessments showed the Russians have lost an estimated 15,000 soldiers, with triple that number wounded.</p> <p>"Putin's view of Americans is that we always suffer from attention deficit disorder, and we'll get distracted by something else," Burns said. "I think — my own strong view is — that Putin was wrong in his assumptions about breaking the alliance and breaking Ukrainian will before the war began. And I think he's just as wrong now."</p> <p>The CIA chief also dismissed persistent rumors about Putin's health, quipping that the Russian leader appeared to be "entirely too healthy." He stressed that was a personal view and not a formal assessment made by the intelligence community.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 New wildfires burn Texas as heat continues
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/24-wildfires-burn-north-texas-heat-continues/story?id=87120124

GIST	<p>An evacuation order has been lifted after authorities responded to 24 new wildfires that burned 7,774 acres in north Texas on Tuesday, according to the Texas A&M Forest Services.</p> <p>Officials say that hot temperatures, winds and drought conditions will continue the threat of fires in the area.</p> <p>The evacuation was issued in response to the Chalk Mountain Fire, which spread from Somervell County into Hood County on Tuesday.</p> <p>The Hood County judge issued a mandatory evacuation in the area of Hutchinson, Coleman Ranch Road, Rock Church Highway and Nocal in Tolar around 7:45 p.m. before the evacuation was lifted around two hours later.</p> <p>The Chalk Mountain Fire burned 6,000 acres, destroyed at least 12 structures and was 10% contained as of Wednesday morning, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.</p> <p>As of Wednesday morning, the service was not able to confirm how many of the affected structures were homes.</p> <p>The National Weather Service has issued a red flag warning for northern Texas and southern Oklahoma as gusty winds near 30 miles per hour, combined with extremely dry vegetation -- which can fuel fires -- and dangerous heat nearing 110 degrees threaten the area on Wednesday.</p> <p>The Texas A&M Forest Service also responded to a fire about 70 miles west of Fort Worth, where a fire at Possum Kingdom Lake reached 500 acres burned and 10% containment as of Tuesday night.</p> <p>At least five homes have been burned from the fire, the service said.</p> <p>The service said they are using bulldozers to dig containment lines around the fires and aircraft to drop water on the growing flames.</p> <p>As of Wednesday morning, no injuries have been reported at either fire.</p> <p>According to the Texas A&M Fire Service, 214 counties are under burn bans on Wednesday, meaning that individuals in those counties are prohibiting from any outdoor burning until further notice.</p> <p>The East County Fire in Kaufman County is currently at 500 acres burned and 40% containment.</p> <p>A number of large fires have reached 80 to 90% containment, including the West Bend Fire that has burned 6,522 acres and the Nethery Road Fire that has burned 3,262 acres.</p> <p>In addition to the North Texas fires that continue to burn, the service said that the risk for significant fires is spreading to east Texas.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/19 Hoover Dam transformer explodes
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/explosion-reported-hoover-dam-87077630
GIST	<p>BOULDER CITY, Nev. -- A transformer exploded Tuesday at Hoover Dam, one of the nation's largest hydroelectric facilities, producing a thick cloud of black smoke and flames that were quickly extinguished.</p> <p>No one was hurt in the explosion near the base of the dam, an engineering marvel on the Colorado River that straddles the border of Arizona and Nevada. Electricity produced at Hoover Dam continued flowing to the 8 million people in Arizona, Nevada and Southern California who rely on it, the Western Area Power Administration said.</p>

The cause of the fire was under investigation and officials were working to determine the extent of damage to the transformer, one of 15 at the complex that control the voltages for power sent to customers.

“There is no risk to the power grid,” said Jacklynn Gould, a regional director for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

The fire ignited around 10 a.m. and was out within a half-hour, Gould said in a statement. It captured the attention of tourists who said they heard an alarm sound and felt the ground rumble beneath them.

William Herro, 13, of San Francisco, was on a viewing bridge with his parents when he saw the explosion and then heard a “big boom.”

“A ton of black smoke just exploded in the air. It looked almost like a mushroom and then a fire followed,” Herro said. “I was really surprised and I started filming.”

The explosion occurred on the apron of a building housing turbines that is slightly downstream from the base of the dam, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) southeast of Las Vegas. Hoover Dam is one of the tallest concrete dams in the U.S. at 726 feet (221 meters). Each of its 17 generators can supply electricity to 100,000 households.

As many as 20,000 vehicles a day drive across the wide top of the dam, which is a National Historic Landmark and is seen in films including “Transformers” and “Fools Rush In.” Most motorists traveling between Arizona and Nevada use a bypass bridge high above the dam that opened in 2010.

The Bureau of Reclamation owns and operates the dam, powerhouses and turbines. The power produced at the site is transferred to a substation where it's marketed through the Western Area Power Administration.

Hoover Dam is considered a baseload source of power, meaning it can respond quickly to the need for additional power on the grid or dial back supply.

The fire triggered an alert at the Western Area Power Administration's control center in Phoenix. Spokesman Lisa Meiman said while the loss of a transformer or other equipment on hydropower facilities can put pressure on a grid, “no single source is integral to the health of the power grid.”

The administration markets power from 57 federal hydroelectric facilities. Hoover Dam and Glen Canyon Dam upstream on the Arizona-Utah border are among the largest, Meiman said.

Hydropower from those dams has threatened lately by the declining levels of Lake Mead and Lake Powell, the two largest human-made reservoirs in the U.S. that hold water from the Colorado River.

Federal officials have taken action in recent years to prop up the lakes to preserve the dams' ability to generate power and keep water flowing to the Western states and Mexico that rely on it. Drought and climate change have sunk the lakes to their lowest levels in decades.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Monkeypox cases alarm LGBTQ activists
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/lgbtq-groups-slam-government-handling-monkeypox/story?id=87119869
GIST	<p>Protesters in several cities across the country are calling on the Biden administration, as well as local officials, to address the rapid rise in monkeypox cases.</p> <p>Demonstrators, including many LGBTQ activists, say officials have yet to provide the necessary outreach to vulnerable populations as issues continue to plague the vaccine rollout.</p> <p>A protest is being planned for Thursday by several organizations in New York City, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak.</p>

Nearly 60% of those diagnosed with monkeypox in New York City have self-identified [as members of the LGBTQ community](#), according to the New York City Department of Health.

The city has seen more than 600 cases so far, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As of July 20, there have been over 2,100 confirmed cases in the U.S. with numbers quickly rising, the CDC says.

Federal and state agencies [have been scrambling to supply enough vaccines](#) and treatments for monkeypox as demand grows by the tens of thousands.

Groups, including HIV/AIDS awareness and advocacy organizations Housing Works and ACT UP New York, said they have a list of requests for both state and federal governments.

"There is a shame involved in this," said Mordechai Levovitz, an organizer of the Thursday protest and clinical director of LGBTQ Jewish youth group JQY. "There is a taboo. This is something that, for people who had [rashes and lesions] on their face, something that they can't hide."

On the state level, the group is demanding an expansion of vaccine appointment availability; meaningful community outreach; a stockpile of vaccines; a safety net fund for people who test positive and have to take off of work; as well as providing hotel rooms for quarantining.

On the federal level, protestors are calling for large-scale information campaigns about monkeypox testing from the CDC, and free and accessible testing for un- and underinsured individuals, as well as for the government to provide a demographic breakdown of infected populations.

"The federal government must invest in communication about monkeypox testing, treatment, and vaccine availability now," according to a statement from Act Up New York.

It continued, "We need meaningful outreach to all communities including vulnerable populations, streamlined communication efforts, mass testing implementation, expedited FDA approval of TPOXX (MPX treatment), and a public plan for the US government to take action on the Bavarian Nordic stockpile (15.2 million vaccines)."

In a press conference Wednesday, New York Department of Health officials said they are working with advocates and activists on outreach efforts.

"We've been developing clinical guidance, expanding test capacity – initially from our public health labs, and now to commercial labs – partnering with the federal government, as the Governor has said, and revitalizing our network of local health departments," said State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett.

She continued, "We're doing all of this with real attention to the importance of dignity and respect, without stigma, and with equity always at the center of our work."

The CDC did not immediately respond to ABC News' requests for comment.

Protests have also taken place in San Francisco where cases are rising. The San Francisco Department of Public Health [reported 55 monkeypox cases](#) on July 19 alone, bringing the total number of cases in the city to 141.

LGBTQ groups have been on high alert regarding the rapid spread of cases, saying that the messaging around the circumstances of infection has not been adequately communicated to at-risk communities.

Though demographic data is not yet available for cases across the U.S., nearly 60% of people infected in New York City self-reported as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, though demographic data on

sexual orientation was unavailable for 39.6% of the cases. Two individuals — 0.6% of cases — reported that they identify as straight.

At least 34% of those infected in Europe identified as gay or bisexual, according to the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#).

However, the sexual orientation of 65% of the infected people is unknown or missing in the data, the European agency said.

Officials have emphasized that gay and bisexual men, in particular, are at risk here in the U.S., though they stress that anyone can contract the illness.

The CDC [says monkeypox can spread](#), among other ways, through through direct contact with an infectious rash, scab or bodily fluids or via respiratory secretions during prolonged face-to-face contact or intimate physical contact.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	07/20 EU: Russia hacking risks ‘spillover effects’
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/russian-hacking-risks-spillover-effects-and-possible-escalation-eu-warns/
GIST	<p>One of the European Union’s top legislative bodies warned Tuesday that Russian hacking groups are “indiscriminately targeting essential entities globally” amid the country’s war with Ukraine, threatening potential spillover effects.</p> <p>The Council of the European Union singled out recent distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks against several EU member states and partners, which pro-Russian hacking groups took credit for.</p> <p>“This increase in malicious cyber activities, in the context of the war against Ukraine, creates unacceptable risks of spillover effects, misinterpretation and possible escalation,” the Council said.</p> <p>Last month, the Russian hacking group Killnet took credit for DDoS attacks on the Lithuanian government and other entities in the country for blocking transit routes to the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. The country’s National Cyber Security Centre warned communications, energy, and financial institutions of potential “intense” attacks that could include destructive ransomware.</p> <p>Killnet had previously targeted other European countries for their support of Ukraine — in May, websites of Italy’s parliament, military and National Health Institute faced disruptions that were tied to the group. In April, Romanian cybersecurity officials said websites tied to government agencies and a bank were hit with DDoS attacks that Killnet took credit for.</p> <p>“The latest [DDoS] attacks against several EU Member States and partners claimed by pro-Russian hacker groups are yet another example of the heightened and tense cyber threat landscape that EU and its Member States have observed,” the Council said in a statement. “We strongly condemn this unacceptable behaviour in cyberspace and express solidarity with all countries that have fallen victim.”</p> <p>“We remain determined to address and investigate malicious cyber activities affecting international peace, security and stability, including the security of the European Union and its Member States, their democratic institutions, citizens, businesses, and civil society,” the statement continued.</p> <p>Cybersecurity officials in both Europe and the United States have taken a more aggressive approach to counteracting and sharing information about foreign hacking groups following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. On Wednesday, U.S. Cyber Command disclosed dozens of malware samples that have been used against computer networks in Ukraine.</p>

	Russian hackers aren't the only ones being called out: On Monday, Belgium's Minister for Foreign Affairs disclosed details about Chinese state-backed threat groups that targeted the country's defense and interior ministries, and urged Chinese authorities to take action to prevent future incidents.
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HEADLINE	07/20 US exposes malware targeting Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/cyber-command-malware-ukraine/
GIST	<p>U.S. Cyber Command on Wednesday shared the technical details related to what the agency says are several types of malware targeting Ukrainian entities in recent months.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials shared the information with the U.S. government, Cyber Command said, and then the agency uploaded various technical details to VirusTotal, Pastebin and GitHub.</p> <p>The agency did not attribute the malware. But, shortly after the Cyber Command release, cybersecurity firm Mandiant published its own analysis and concluded the activity was “the work of two separate cyber espionage groups.” Those groups — tracked as UNC1151 and UNC2589 — have both been active in targeting Ukraine in multiple operations, Mandiant said.</p> <p>UNC1151 is thought to be associated with the Belarusian government as part of the ongoing regional disinformation campaign known as Ghostwriter, while UNC2589 is an effort that works in support of Russian government goals, Mandiant said.</p> <p>Cyber Command said it shared the details as part of an effort to spread awareness.</p> <p>“[Cyber National Mission Force] is disclosing IOCs in close coordination with our Ukrainian counterparts,” the agency wrote on Pastebin. “The Security Service of Ukraine discovered several types of malware in their country over the last few months, and have analyzed the samples and identified IOCs. The IOCs included 20 novel indicators in various formats.”</p> <p>In a series of tweets, the agency added that it was sharing the details “to highlight potential compromises & enable collective security.”</p> <p>A Cyber Command spokesperson told CyberScoop that part of the purpose of sharing the information is “to enable our U.S. government partners, such as DHS and FBI, and industry as well as our international allies and partners to defend critical infrastructure and our democratic values and institutions.”</p> <p>Earlier Wednesday, Ukraine's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-UA) published a notice about a malicious Microsoft PowerPoint file that, based on “the name and content-bait of the PPT document, we assume that the attack was aimed at state organizations of Ukraine.”</p> <p>The file sought to load the AgentTesla malware onto target machines, the Ukrainians said. AgentTesla, first identified in 2014, is an information-stealing trojan that's sold and “distributed across a number of underground hacking forums and platforms,” according to a June 2021 analysis from Blackberry.</p> <p>The last time Cyber Command shared technical details in this way was in January when it publicly linked the MuddyWater hacking activities to the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS).</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 FBI concern: growth sophisticated attacks
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/fbi-worries-about-future-cyber-threats/
GIST	The FBI is deeply worried that cybercriminals and nation-state adversaries are developing more precision in their attacks and taking advantage of innovations in artificial intelligence that will compound the digital threat in the years to come, FBI Assistant Director for Cyber Bryan Vorndran said Wednesday.

“When we think about software as a service or even supply chain attacks, what happens when the adversary understands that there is perhaps one software factory that services the entire community,” said Vorndran, who oversees 1,000 FBI agents focused on cybercrimes nationwide, during a speech Wednesday at a Fordham University cybersecurity conference.

“If they’re that precise on targeting, it could shut down the entire commercial real estate industry. That is a huge problem,” he said.

China is already displaying more exactness when it comes to targeting its victims, but that level of sophistication isn’t commonplace among other nation-state adversaries yet, Vorndran said. For now, his No. 1 recommendation for business leaders is to understand how shared service software is used across their organizations because that’s often malicious hackers’ easiest target.

The FBI is also concerned that Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and other foreign cybercriminals will begin carrying out ransomware attacks with the same intensity as Russia’s cybercrime syndicates. It’s a concern that’s further complicated by what Vorndran called the “blended threat.”

“It is very difficult to understand where the nation-state threat starts and stops and where the criminal threat starts and stops,” he said. “When we don’t see command and control from the nation-state over[head], it muddies the water in terms of understanding clearly what an adversary is after and that affects our ability to deploy the right resources.”

Finally, Vorndran said the emergence of synthetic content such as deep fakes and artificial intelligence will create massive and vexing problems for democracies. [Citing the work of University of California at Berkeley scholar Hany Farid](#), an expert in digital analysis, Vorndran said he believes that within two to three years the world will be saturated with synthetic audio and video content that is virtually indistinguishable from reality.

“It is a huge threat that we need to get our arms around,” Vorndran said. “There’s obviously tremendous downstream effects to deepfakes and synthetic content.”

For example, he said, it is possible that in the near term prosecutors will not be able to prove criminal guilt because of deep fakes that copy human voices with staggering precision.

“Think about the argument in court where somebody says, ‘That’s not my client’s voice on a Title III intercept. That’s a fake,’” Vorndran said. “How do we authenticate that even in the basic rule of law?”

Vorndran said artificial intelligence is also a technology the FBI is closely watching. U.S. Cyber Command Executive Director [Dave Frederick recently said CyberCom is also devoting](#) increasing resources to monitor and develop AI capabilities.

“The fear of how AI is going to expand and the fact that we may not be able to control it should be of deep concern to us,” Vorndran said. He declined to discuss this threat in further detail, calling it “too amorphous.”

At the beginning of the ransomware threat, he admitted that the FBI didn’t fully anticipate the scope of the problem. “Our intent is always to stay at pace with the threat,” he said. “Sometimes that’s simply not possible.”

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HEADLINE	07/20 Ukraine: cyber officials in US for training
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/fbi-ukraine-cyber-officials/
GIST	The FBI brought a delegation of cybersecurity officials from five different Ukrainian government agencies to New York for a bureau-hosted conference and a series of meetings with American officials in

Washington next week, according to Victor Zhora, the deputy head of [Ukraine's State Special Communications Service](#).

Top [cyber officials with Zhora's agency](#) as well as Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Cyber Police and the National Cybersecurity Coordination Center are included in the delegation.

The Ukrainian cyber officials have been invited to meet with Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Director Jen Easterly next week and will head to the FBI's national headquarters for a series of case study presentations, Zhora said. A second Ukrainian official said members of the delegation also will visit the State Department for meetings.

Easterly plans to use the meeting to discuss how CISA "can deepen collaboration with our Ukrainian partners," a CISA spokesperson said via email.

The trip shines a light on the growing level of cooperation between Ukrainian and U.S. officials when it comes to confronting the cybersecurity threat from Moscow. To be sure, it is not unusual for allies to visit officials in Washington, but it is significant for cyber officials from a country at war to visit U.S. law enforcement and Cabinet agencies to receive training.

Zhora told CyberScoop that the group is particularly interested in learning how to improve interagency coordination to better confront cybersecurity issues.

"We see a lot of confirmation here that the United States are so successful in coordination between cybersecurity agencies," Zhora said. "The secret of this coordination is very available and helpful for us."

"We should see the example of collaboration between US agencies, and we will bring this experience back to Ukraine, and we'll do the same. That's the idea of our visit."

VICTOR ZHORA, DEPUTY HEAD, UKRAINE'S STATE SPECIAL COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

The ongoing pressures of the [Russian war](#) have made it paramount for Ukrainian officials to work swiftly to confront cyber aggression coming from Moscow, Zhora said.

"That's the reason why five agencies are here," Zhora said. "We should see the example of collaboration between US agencies, and we will bring this experience back to Ukraine, and we'll do the same. That's the idea of our visit."

Zhora said he and the other Ukrainian officials also met with FBI Director Christopher Wray on Tuesday. Wray was in New York for an interview at the Fordham University cybersecurity conference with U.S. Cyber Command and National Security Agency Director Paul Nakasone.

The Ukrainian delegation will participate in a Wednesday panel at Fordham focused on how they are protecting Ukraine's "virtual front line."

The FBI and the State Department declined to comment.

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HEADLINE	07/20 New Rust-based ransomware family
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/new-rust-based-ransomware-family.html
GIST	<p>Kaspersky security researchers have disclosed details of a brand-new ransomware family written in Rust, making it the third strain after BlackCat and Hive to use the programming language.</p> <p>Luna, as it's called, is "fairly simple" and can run on Windows, Linux, and ESXi systems, with the malware banking on a combination of Curve25519 and AES for encryption.</p>

"Both the Linux and ESXi samples are compiled using the same source code with some minor changes from the Windows version," the Russian firm [noted](#) in a report published today.

Advertisements for Luna on darknet forums suggest that the ransomware is intended for use only by Russian-speaking affiliates. Its core developers are also believed to be of Russian origin owing to spelling mistakes in the ransom note hard-coded within the binary.

"Luna confirms the trend for cross-platform ransomware," the researchers stated, adding how the platform agnostic nature of languages like Golang and Rust are giving the operators the ability to target and attack at scale and evade static analysis.

That said, there is very little information on the victimology patterns given that Luna is a freshly discovered criminal group and its activity is still being actively monitored.

Luna is far from the only ransomware to set its eyes on ESXi systems, what with another nascent ransomware family known as [Black Basta](#) undergoing an update last month to include a Linux variant.

Black Basta is also notable for starting up a Windows system in [safe mode](#) before encryption to [take advantage](#) of the fact that third-party endpoint detection solutions may not start after booting the operating system in safe mode. This enables the ransomware to go undetected and easily lock the desired files.

"Ransomware remains a big problem for today's society," the researchers said. "As soon as some families come off the stage, others take their place."

LockBit, however, remains one of the [most active ransomware gangs](#) of 2022, often relying on RDP access to enterprise networks to disable backup services and create a [Group Policy](#) to terminate running processes and execute the ransomware payload.

"LockBit's success is also due to its developers and affiliates continued evolution of features and tactics, which include the malware's [fast encryption speed](#), ability to target both Windows and Linux machines, its brash recruitment drives, and high-profile targets," the Symantec Threat Hunter Team, part of Broadcom Software, [said](#) in a report.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Google, EU: malicious Russia cyber activity
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/google-eu-warn-malicious-russian-cyber-activity
GIST	<p>Google and the European Union have issued separate warnings this week over Russian cyberattacks and misinformation campaigns.</p> <p>According to Google, many Russian groups have been focusing on Ukraine since the start of the war, but the level of Russian activity outside of Ukraine is mostly the same as before the conflict started.</p> <p>The internet giant has been monitoring Russian activity and it has disrupted some campaigns. The company recently noticed that the threat actor tracked as Turla, which has been linked to Russia's FSB security service, has started distributing a piece of Android malware.</p> <p>Google says this is the first time Turla has been spotted using Android malware. In April, researchers at Lab52 did report coming across a new Android malware that had used Turla-linked infrastructure, but they could not attribute it to the group.</p> <p>The Android app distributed recently by Turla was hosted on a domain spoofing the Ukrainian Azov Regiment. The app claimed to allow users to launch denial-of-service (DoS) attacks against Russian websites, but in reality it only sent a single request to the targeted site.</p>

The app, which only had a “minuscule” number of installs, is believed to have been inspired by an Android app created by pro-Ukraine developers that did launch DoS attacks against Russian websites.

Google has also seen at least two Russian state-sponsored threat groups — APT28 and Sandworm — exploiting the recently disclosed Windows vulnerability tracked as [Follina](#). Profit-driven cybercriminals have also been exploiting Follina, as the number of attacks targeting Ukraine has increased.

The company has also observed misinformation campaigns conducted by the Belarus-linked [Ghostwriter](#) (UNC1151) group, as well as phishing attacks launched by the Coldriver ([Callisto](#)) group against government and defense officials, politicians, NGOs, think tanks, and journalists.

The European Union has warned member states about a significant increase in malicious cyber activities since Russia initiated its invasion of Ukraine. In a [statement](#), the Council of the EU highlighted the January [attacks on Ukrainian websites](#) and systems, the attack against [Viasat’s KA-SAT network](#), and the DDoS attacks launched by pro-Russian hackers against member states ([Norway](#) and [Lithuania](#)).

“Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine has been accompanied by a significant increase of malicious cyber activities, including by a striking and concerning number of hackers and hacker groups indiscriminately targeting essential entities globally,” the Council of the EU said. “This increase in malicious cyber activities, in the context of the war against Ukraine, creates unacceptable risks of spillover effects, misinterpretation and possible escalation.”

Cybersecurity firm Palo Alto Networks has also analyzed some attacks believed to have been conducted by Russian threat actors. The company has observed a [campaign by Cloaked Ursa](#) (APT29, Nobelium and Cozy Bear) that appears to have targeted several Western diplomatic missions between May and June 2022, including foreign embassies in Portugal and Brazil.

In this campaign, the attackers leveraged popular online storage services such as Google Drive and Dropbox to avoid detection.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Russian hackers copycat DoS app
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/russian-hackers-ukrainians-copycat/
GIST	<p>Researchers have spotted what they believe is the first recorded instance of Android malware distributed by prolific state-sponsored Russian hacking group Turla.</p> <p>Also known as Venomous Bear among many other monikers, the APT group is linked to Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), a successor to the KGB.</p> <p>As such, it’s currently involved in operations targeting Ukrainian forces and pro-Ukrainian activists, many of whom have been encouraged to enlist in a volunteer “IT army” to DDoS Russian assets.</p> <p>To do so, some are encouraged to use apps like StopWar, an Android application designed to make it easy for Ukraine supporters to DDoS pre-selected Russian sites direct from their smartphone.</p> <p>It is this app, spotted by Google’s Threat Analysis Group (TAG) in March, that the Turla group has now spoofed in an attempt to infect users with malware.</p> <p>The apps in question are hosted on a domain which spoofs the Ukrainian Azov Regiment, a far-right infantry unit currently fighting on the front line.</p> <p>“The apps were not distributed through the Google Play Store, but hosted on a domain controlled by the actor and disseminated via links on third party messaging services,” said Google TAG security engineer, Billy Leonard.</p>

	<p>“The app is distributed under the guise of performing Denial of Service (DoS) attacks against a set of Russian websites. However, the 'DoS' consists only of a single GET request to the target website, not enough to be effective.”</p> <p>It’s unclear what the final malicious payload is, and in any case Leonard explained that the number of installs so far has been “miniscule.” However, the tactic highlights the varied measures and counter measures both sides are using in a bid to win the cyber war.</p> <p>In March, security researchers warned pro-Ukrainian activists to be cautious when downloading DDoS tools from the internet as they may be booby-trapped with info-stealing Russian malware.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 APT29 targets DropBox, Google Drive
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/russian-target-dropbox-google-cloud/
GIST	<p>Russian adversaries are taking advantage of trusted cloud services, including DropBox and Google Drive to deliver malware to businesses and governments, according to new research.</p> <p>Cloaked Ursula – AKA the Russian government-linked APT29 or Cozy Bear – is increasingly using popular online storage services because it makes attacks difficult to detect and prevent, researchers at Palo Alto Networks Unit 42 wrote in a report.</p> <p>Believed to have targeted several Western diplomatic missions and foreign embassies between May and June 2022, the recent campaigns were masked as an agenda for an upcoming meeting with an ambassador. But the phishing documents contained a link to a malicious HTML file that served as a dropper for additional malicious files in the target network, including a Cobalt Strike payload.</p> <p>Palo Alto Networks disclosed the activity to Google and DropBox, which have taken action to block it. However, the Unit 42 researchers have warned organizations and governments to be on high alert. “In light of APT 29’s new tactics, organizations should be concerned about their abilities to identify, inspect and stop unwanted traffic to legitimate cloud storage providers.”</p> <p>Cozy Bear has previously used legitimate cloud services to deliver malware, but the two most recent campaigns leveraged Google Drive cloud storage services for the first time. “The ubiquitous nature of Google Drive cloud storage services – combined with the trust that millions of customers worldwide have in them – make their inclusion in this APT’s malware delivery process exceptionally concerning,” the researchers said.</p> <p>When the use of trusted cloud services is combined with encryption, it becomes “extremely difficult” for organizations to detect malicious activity, they warned.</p> <p>The attack is “hardly surprising,” given that services such as these are used by a large number of organizations, said independent security researcher Sean Wright. “It makes it difficult to tell what is legitimate and what is potentially malicious, so from an attacker perspective, this is an incredibly powerful tool to hide their malicious content and actions.”</p> <p>To help reduce risk, Wright recommends organizations choose a single service. In addition, Wright advised firms to ensure they use enterprise or business versions. “These often come with extra controls that can help reduce the likelihood of attacks or help gain extra visibility to hopefully catch them in action.”</p> <p>Responding to the findings, a Dropbox spokesperson told <i>Infosecurity</i>: “We can confirm that we worked with our industry partners and the researchers on this matter, and disabled user accounts immediately. If we detect any user violating our terms of service, we take appropriate action, which may include suspending or disabling user accounts.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Magecart attacks hit hundreds restaurants
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/magecart-supply-chain-attacks/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have uncovered two separate Magecart campaigns which targeted online ordering platforms to exfiltrate card details from at least 311 US restaurants.</p> <p>Recorded Future found e-skimming software injected into three platforms: MenuDrive, Harbortouch, and InTouchPOS. It has already identified 50,000 payment cards taken in these attacks and put up for sale on the dark web, but warned that many more may have been exposed.</p> <p>The first campaign, targeting MenuDrive and Harbortouch, began around January 18. By hitting these providers, the attackers could access a large number of partner restaurants who use their services.</p> <p>Some 80 restaurants hosted on MenuDrive domains and 74 hosted on Harbourtouch were infected.</p> <p>“The malicious e-skimmer loader scripts are still present on a portion of the websites,” the researchers noted.</p> <p>“However, authorizen[.]net, the malicious domain used to host the e-skimmers themselves and receive stolen data, has been blocked since May 26 2022.”</p> <p>The second campaign began no later than November 12 2021 and impacted 157 restaurants using InTouchPOS. Recorded Future warned that a “portion” of those restaurants remain infected and the malicious domains remain active.</p> <p>The InTouchPOS campaign was likely perpetrated by the same actors that have compromised over 400 e-commerce websites since May 2020, with over 30 of the websites still infected as of June, the vendor claimed.</p> <p>“Cyber-criminals often seek the highest payout for the least amount of work. This has led them to target restaurants’ online ordering platforms,” said Recorded Future.</p> <p>“When even a single platform is attacked, dozens or even hundreds of restaurants can have their transactions compromised, which allows cyber-criminals to steal vast amounts of customer payment card data disproportionate to the number of systems they actually hack. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this due to an influx of online ordering as restaurants’ dine-in options were restricted.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Ransomware compromises slump 34%
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-compromises-take-a-dive/
GIST	<p>The number of ransomware victims in the second quarter was over a third lower than Q1 2022, thanks in part to the halt in operations from the prolific Conti group, according to GuidePoint Security.</p> <p>The firm’s quarterly ransomware report was based on data obtained from publicly available resources, including postings by threat groups on their data leak sites. In the second quarter, the vendor tracked 30 ransomware groups and 581 publicly posted victims.</p> <p>“The dissolution of Conti as an actively operating ransomware group in Q2 meant the group only claimed 41 victims, compared to 103 in Q1 2022 which contributed to the decrease in total victims for the quarter,” it explained.</p> <p>“The GuidePoint Research and Intelligence Team (GRIT) also observed a steep decrease in claimed victims from the Clop ransomware group, with only 11 posts this quarter, compared to 173 throughout the first quarter of 2022.”</p>

	<p>However, the news will be scant comfort for manufacturing sector organizations, which bore the brunt of attacks in the quarter. Together with those in the construction sector, in third place, they accounted for 20% of all victims in the period. Technology firms comprised the second highest number of corporate victims.</p> <p>Drew Schmitt, GRIT operations lead at GuidePoint Security, explained that manufacturing and construction were hit hard by the Lockbit and Black Basta groups. The former underwent a revamp in June, from version 2.0 to 3.0, although Lockbit 2.0 remains the most prolific actor in the year to date.</p> <p>However, the names attached to many groups may be misleading, as they are often connected to the same threat actors. In 2021, Chainalysis was able to connect Hades, WastedLocker, DoppelPaymer, Phoenix and Macaw Locker to the same Evil Corp group which tried to obfuscate its efforts in a bid to evade sanctions.</p> <p>GRIT claimed there has been “significant fluctuations” in both the number of ransomware victims and threat groups so far this year. However, the expected surge in activity as a result of the war in Ukraine does not appear to have happened as of yet.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 LinkedIn: most impersonated for phishing
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/linkedin-remains-the-most-impersonated-brand-in-phishing-attacks/
GIST	<p>LinkedIn is holding the top spot for the most impersonated brand in phishing campaigns observed during the second quarter of 2022.</p> <p>Statistical data from cybersecurity company Check Point shows that the social platform for professionals is at the top of the list for the second quarter in a row.</p> <p>Compared to the first quarter of the year, LinkedIn impersonation dropped from 52% to 45%. However, it maintains a considerable distance from the second most imitated brand by fraudsters, Microsoft, currently at 13%.</p> <p>The central theme in spoofed Microsoft emails is requests to verify Outlook accounts to steal usernames and passwords.</p> <p>DHL currently holds the third spot in the list with 12%, down from 14%.</p> <p>Amazon rose to the fourth position, jumping from 2% in Q1 2022 to 9% this quarter, while Apple follows on fifth place with 3%; also a notable increase compared to last quarter’s 0.8%.</p> <p>In the case of Amazon, the phishing emails attempt to steal the target’s billing information, including full credit card data, the researchers say.</p> <p>LinkedIn phishing</p> <p>As Check Point explains in its report, phishing campaigns using fake LinkedIn emails try to mimic common messages from the platform to its users, such as “You appeared in 8 searchers this week”, or “You have one new message.”</p> <p>The sender addresses are spoofed to appear as if the messages are automated or come from the support or even the security department.</p> <p>Some lures used in these campaigns include fake promotions for the LinkedIn Pro service, bogus policy updates, or even threats of account termination for “unverified customers.”</p> <p>They all lead to a phishing web page where the victims are asked to enter their LinkedIn credentials, enabling the threat actors to take over the accounts.</p>

With access to a LinkedIn account, a threat actor could deploy targeted phishing campaigns to reach the victim's coworkers or valuable individuals in their connections network.

Another reason for targeting LinkedIn accounts is that they can be used to set up fake job offer campaigns.

In a recent example, North Korean hackers were able to trick an employee of a token-based online video game into downloading a malicious PDF that allowed the threat actor to [steal \\$620 million worth of cryptocurrency](#).

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HEADLINE	07/20 Neopets data breach: 69M exposed
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/neopets-data-breach-exposes-personal-data-of-69-million-members/
GIST	<p>Virtual pet website Neopets has suffered a data breach leading to the theft of source code and a database containing the personal information of over 69 million members.</p> <p>Neopets is a popular website where members can own, raise, and play games with their virtual pets. Neopets recently launched NFTs that will be used as part of an online Metaverse game.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a hacker known as 'TarTarX' began selling the source code and database for the Neopets.com website for four bitcoins, worth approximately \$94,000 at today's prices.</p> <p>In a conversation with BleepingComputer, TarTarX says that they stole the database and approximately 460MB (compressed) of source code for the neopets.com website.</p> <p>The seller claims that this database contains the account information of over 69 million members, and in a screenshot shared with BleepingComputer, you can see the data includes members' usernames, names, email addresses, zip code, date of birth, gender, country, an initial registration email, and other site/game-related information.</p> <p>While the hacker would not reveal how they gained access to the website, they told us that they did not ransom the data to Jumpstart, the owners of Neopets, but have received interest from potential buyers.</p> <p>At this time, BleepingComputer has not been able to independently verify the authenticity of the database. However, pompompurin, the owner of the Breached.co hacking forum, verified the hacker's claims by registering an account on Neopets.com and being sent their newly created record from the database.</p> <p>"Vouch, I registered an account on the website and he sent the full entry," pompompurin posted to the Breached.co forums.</p> <p>Furthermore, this verification showed that TarTarX continued to have access to the neopets.com site even as they began selling the data.</p> <p>Breach is confirmed</p> <p>After the news of the breach spread online, the Neopets team, designated by the TNT abbreviation, has confirmed on the unofficial Neopets Discord server that they are aware of the security incident and working on resolving it.</p> <p>Volunteer Discord moderators are warning that changing passwords on Neopets may not help secure your account if the attackers still have access to their servers.</p> <p>"We should note that the effectiveness of changing your Neopets password is currently debatable as long as hackers have live access to the database, as they can simply check what your new password is," reads an announcement on the Neopets Discord server.</p>

"We cannot therefore strictly advise you on the best course of action given the circumstances."

However, if you use the same Neopets password on other sites, you are strongly advised to change your password on those sites to a different one.

Neopets members can monitor a [topic on the Neopets Help Site Jelleyneo](#) or the [Jelleyneo Twitter account](#), where other members are keeping track of any official updates from the Neopets staff.

This is not the first data breach for Neopets, with member data [previously circulating online](#) in 2016 from a breach that [occurred in 2012](#).

BleepingComputer has contacted Jumpstart about the breach but has not received a reply at this time.

Others already had access

While this breach appears to be new, Neopets has a history of unauthorized access to their systems. A Reddit user named [neo_truths](#) told BleepingComputer that they have had "read" access to the database for at least a year after finding exploits in the site's leaked source code.

neo_truths told us that they use this access to analyze and share information about the game mechanics on Reddit.

However, neo_truths said that they used someone else's exploit to inject code into a PHP [eval\(\)](#) function to modify the game as an April Fools joke.

Unfortunately, neo_truths says that the code is huge and spread out over many servers, with only a few developers to manage it. This lack of staff has led to numerous breaches by multiple people in the past, with one actively used exploit reported to the devs who ultimately fixed it.

"Neo is full of breaches and multiple people had (and maybe still have) access for years. The only difference is they use it privately (mostly for genning and selling offsite) and I try to address some known issues with actual data," explains neo_truths in a [comment](#) on Reddit.

"I have already reported 2 exploits that allowed db access that other people had used (one of them for months/years hard to tell). I could have not found them if I didn't have access myself.

"I could always choose to reveal my own method thus losing access which would be the correct thing, but at the same time that would let the others run free. But yes I understand that from a user perspective its very worrying someone can arbitrarily access their data."

While neo_truths has had access to the Neopets database for some time, they told BleepingComputer that they were not involved in this recent breach and believes the threat actors gained access using a flaw unrelated to Neopets code.

"The exploit this time is unrelated to neo code, just a general exploit many websites have," neo_truths told BleepingComputer.

Update 7/20/22 11:07 PM EST: Clarified that the Discord server is an unofficial Neopets server and that the announcement was from volunteer moderators. Added information about Neo_Truths.

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HEADLINE	07/21 New Redeemer ransomware version
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-redeemer-ransomware-version-promoted-on-hacker-forums/

GIST

A threat actor is promoting a new version of their free-to-use 'Redeemer' ransomware builder on hacker forums, offering unskilled threat actors an easy entry to the world of encryption-backed extortion attacks.

According to its author, the new version 2.0 release was written entirely in C++ and works on Windows Vista, 7, 8, 10, and 11, featuring multi-threaded performance and a medium AV detection rate.

Unlike many Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) operations, anyone can download and use the Redeemer ransomware builder to launch their own attacks. However, when a victim decides to pay the ransom, the author receives 20% of the fees and shares the master key to be combined with the private build key held by the affiliate for decryption.

Also, the new version features a new graphical user interface for the affiliate to build the ransomware executable and decryption tool, while all instructions on how to use it are enclosed in the ZIP.

The author says the project will go open-source if they lose interest, which is precisely what happened with Redeemer 1.0 back in June 2021, when the threat actor publicly released its source code.

Redeemer 2.0 details

The new ransomware builder version features several additions like support for Windows 11, GUI tools, and more communication options such as XMPP and Tox Chat.

Moreover, there's now a campaign ID tracking system, adding the data into the executable, allowing threat actors to track various campaigns they may be conducting.

Because the ransom amount is set during the building of the executable and corresponds to a specific ID, the affiliate cannot make arbitrary claims to the author, so the latter's 20% cut is guaranteed.

The author has created a page on the dark web site Dread for the affiliates to acquire the kit, establish communication, access instructions, and receive support.

Researchers at [Cyble](#), who have analyzed the new version, report that the ransomware creates a mutex upon launch to avoid multiple running instances on the victim's system and abuses Windows APIs to execute itself with admin privileges.

Before encryption, the malware abuses Windows commands to clear the event logs and delete shadow copies and any system state backups, preventing easy/free restoration.

Bleeping Computer tested the ransomware independently and found that it didn't delete all files after encrypting them, so its operation appears unreliable now.

Should you be worried?

The problem with projects like Redeemer is that they offer a dramatically lower bar of entry to the ransomware space for many cybercriminals, including low-skilled threat actors.

While these lower-tier hackers usually lack the skills to find initial access points on valuable corporate networks, they can still cause significant damage to many vital but inadequately protected entities, like healthcare and small businesses.

However, the adoption of this new ransomware doesn't appear very high, but even if the project fails, the promise of releasing the source code creates the gloomy prospect of new projects based on the Redeemer source code.

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HEADLINE 07/21 New 'Lightning Framework' Linux malware

SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-lightning-framework-linux-malware-installs-rootkits-backdoors/
GIST	<p>A new and previously undetected malware dubbed 'Lightning Framework' targets Linux systems and can be used to backdoor infected devices using SSH and deploy multiple types of rootkits.</p> <p>Described as a "Swiss Army Knife" in a report published today by Intezer, Lightning Framework is a modular malware that also comes with support for plugins.</p> <p>"The framework has both passive and active capabilities for communication with the threat actor, including opening up SSH on an infected machine, and a polymorphic malleable command and control configuration," Intezer security researcher Ryan Robinson said.</p> <p>This malware is yet to be spotted in the wild, and some of its components (referenced in the source code) are yet to be found and analyzed.</p> <p>Lightning Framework is built using a simple structure: a downloader component that will download and install the malware's other modules and plugins, including its core module, on compromised Linux devices.</p> <p>The malware uses typosquatting and will masquerade as the Seahorse GNOME password and encryption key manager to evade detection on infected systems.</p> <p>After reaching out to its command-and-control (C2) server over TCP sockets using C2 info stored in undetectable polymorphic encoded configuration files, Lightning Framework fetches its plugins and the core module.</p> <p>This core module (<i>kkdmflush</i>) is the framework's main module and is the one the malware uses to receive commands from its C2 server and to execute its plugins.</p> <p>"The module has many capabilities and uses a number of techniques to hide artifacts to remain running under the radar," Robinson added.</p> <p>Other methods to hide its presence include altering malicious artifacts' timestamps using timestomping and hiding its Process ID (PID) and any related network ports using one of several rootkits it can deploy.</p> <p>It can also achieve persistence by creating a script named <i>elasticsearch</i> under <code>/etc/rc.d/init.d/</code> that gets executed on each system boot to launch the downloader module and reinfect the device.</p> <p>Last but not least, this malware will also add its own SSH-based backdoor by starting an SSH server using one of the downloaded plugins (Linux.Plugin.Lightning.Sshd).</p> <p>The newly launched OpenSSH daemon has hardcoded private and host keys, enabling attackers to SSH into the infected machines using their own SSH keys.</p> <p>"The Lightning Framework is an interesting malware as it is not common to see such a large framework developed for targeting Linux," Robinson concluded.</p> <p>"Although we do not have all the files, we can infer some of the missing functionality based on strings and code of the modules that we do possess."</p> <p>Signs of a Linux malware surge?</p> <p>Lightning Framework is just the latest Linux malware strain capable of fully compromising and backdooring devices that surfaced recently.</p>

	<p>Intezer security researchers have also spotted OrBit, a stealthy malware that hijacks shared libraries to intercept function calls to steal information from backdoored Linux systems and infect all running processes.</p> <p>Symbiote, another malware targeting Linux devices jointly analyzed by BlackBerry and Intezer researchers, acts as a system-wide parasite leaving no signs of infection and uses the same tactic to load itself into running processes.</p> <p>Researchers have also spotted a stealthy backdoor named BPFDoor has been stealthily targeting Linux and Solaris systems undetected for over five years, bypassing firewalls for remote access.</p> <p>A fourth Linux malware strain, a rootkit dubbed Syslogk unveiled by Avast researchers last month, has the capability to force-load its modules into the Linux kernel, backdoor infected machines, and hide network traffic and artifacts to evade detection.</p> <p>"Malware targeting Linux environments surged in 2021, with a large amount of innovation resulting in new malicious code, especially in ransomwares, trojans, and botnets," Robinson said.</p> <p>"With the rise in use of the cloud, it is no wonder that malware innovation is still accelerating at breakneck speed in this realm."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Massive 8220 gang botnet army surge
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/lax-security-fuels-cloud-botnet-army-surge
GIST	<p>Leveraging little more than Linux bugs, common cloud application vulnerabilities, and misconfigurations, the 8220 Gang has been able to use its latest IRC botnet to infect more than 30,000 hosts with their PwnRig cryptominer.</p> <p>Researchers with SentinelOne reported observing this noteworthy increase in the number of infected hosts over the course of just the past month. In mid-2021, the analysts said the malicious botnet was running on just 2,000 hosts worldwide.</p> <p>The 8220 Gang gets its name from its original command-and-control communications port choice: 8220.</p> <p>"Over the past few years, 8220 Gang has slowly evolved their simple, yet effective, Linux infection scripts to expand a botnet and illicit cryptocurrency miner," the cloud botnet security warning explained. "From our observations, the group has made changes over the recent weeks to expand the botnet to nearly 30,000 victims globally."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 AIG threat group unique business model
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/aig-threat-group-launches-unique-business-model
GIST	<p>A threat group calling itself the Atlas Intelligence Group (AIG, aka Atlantis Cyber-Army) has recently surfaced with what appears to be a somewhat different — and potentially trend-setting — cybercrime model.</p> <p>Researchers from Cyberint who were the first to spot the group described the threat actor as selling a variety of services via its main website, including access to stolen databases, exclusive data leaks, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) services, and initial access to enterprise networks via RDP clients and Web shells. Cyberint said this week that its researchers spotted AIG in May and have observed it growing rapidly since then.</p> <p>What makes the threat actor different from the myriad others with similar offerings is the fact that the operators themselves appear to be entirely outsourcing the actual hacking activities to independent cyber-mercenaries who have no direct connection to the operation. For instance, when a client purchases AIG's</p>

DDoS, data theft, or malicious spam services, the group advertises for and hires independent contractors to execute the actual tasks. That's unlike most threat groups, which recruit and maintain the same team of hackers for different campaigns.

A Model for OpSec

AIG's model appears designed to ensure a high level of operations security for its leaders by keeping them segregated from those doing the criminal hacking activity, according to Cyberint.

"AIG is the first group I've seen that is using this business model," says Shmuel Gihon, security researcher with Cyberint. "Every team has its leaders, and every team has key members. But here it's different: we have one leader that controls everything and everyone."

[AIG's business model appears](#) designed to take advantage of the growing number of hacker-for-hire groups that have begun surfacing all over the world in recent years. The groups, [many of which operate out of India, Russia, or the United Arab Emirates](#), specialize in [breaking into target networks](#), stealing data, and carrying out a variety of other malicious activities on behalf of the clients who hire them. One example of such a group is Russia-based "Void Balaur," a cyber-mercenary group that researchers at Trend Micro and others have linked to [attacks on thousands of organizations and individuals](#) for several years.

Gihon says Cyberint's analysis of AIG's activities shows it is being run by a secretive individual using the handle "Mr. Eagle." This individual appears responsible for initiating all AIG campaigns and plans. Cyberint has so far been able to identify at least four other individuals that are operating under this leader, and who are responsible for tasks such as advertising the group's services, communicating with customers, and operating its Telegram channels.

"What makes them different is the fact that they are very good [at] making themselves anonymous and approaching this operation as entrepreneurs and not as technical people," Gihon says. The group's behavior suggests the core members — or at least its leader — were red teamers or malicious hackers that have decided to lead rather than operate.

"They have been around in the darknet and in the cybercrime industry for a while and observed how things are operating," he added.

Telegram Communications

Cyberint said it has observed the group use three different Telegram channels, with thousands of subscribers between them, for its operations.

One of the channels is a marketplace for leaked databases. The databases appear to belong to organizations in different sectors such as government, finance, manufacturing, and technology, from around the world. The collection of databases on sale via the Telegram channel suggests that AIG isn't focusing on any specific region or sector. Rather, the group appears to be targeting organizations that it thinks might be valuable for potential buyers.

Some of the databases are available for as little as 15 euros and contain information such as email and physical addresses, phone numbers, and other information likely of interest to distributors of malicious spam, spear-phishing groups, and hacktivists.

"AIG claims that these databases are exclusive, so the assumption is that they obtained it [via] their contractors," Gihon says. Given the low price, it is unlikely that AIG obtained them from a third-party and is reselling them, he says.

AIG has a second Telegram channel that it uses to publish ads for various hacking services that it might be looking for, and where hackers have an opportunity to bid for contracts. The channel serves as the threat group's source for finding malware developers, social engineers, red teamers, and other cyber-mercenaries.

	<p>AIG's third Telegram channel, which serves as its communication channel, is where the group posts announcements, lists of intended targets, and other information. The threat actor also maintains an e-commerce store where people can purchase AIG's services and stolen databases using cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Gihon says AIG's business model gives it a level of flexibility that other threat groups do not have.</p> <p>"The leader is not bound to any one of the members because they are all contractors," he says. "So, while other groups have their ups and downs given the fact that they are the same group of people most of the time, Mr. Eagle has the privilege to hire the best of the best anytime," he says. "This could make this team very lethal in the end game."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Chaotic Lapsus\$ group quiet, defunct?
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/chaotic-lapsus-quiet-threat-persists
GIST	<p>The LAPSUS\$ extortion group has gone quiet following a notorious and rapid rise through the threat landscape, targeting companies including Microsoft, NVIDIA, and Okta, and earning notoriety for its freewheeling, decentralized approach to cybercrime.</p> <p>However, researchers said the group is likely not gone — and, in any case, its "brazen" tactics may leave a legacy.</p> <p>A new report from exposure management specialist Tenable digs into the group's background and the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) it has used, maturing from distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks and website vandalism to more sophisticated methods. These include the use of social engineering techniques to reset user passwords and co-opt multifactor authentication (MFA) tools.</p> <p>"Characterized by erratic behavior and outlandish demands that cannot be met — at one point, the group even accused a target of hacking back — the LAPSUS\$ group's tenure at the forefront of the cybersecurity news cycle was chaotic," the report notes.</p> <p>Chaos, Lack of Logic Part of the Plan</p> <p>"You could absolutely call LAPSUS\$ 'a little punk rock,' but I try to avoid making bad actors sound that cool," notes Claire Tills, senior research engineer at Tenable. "Their chaotic and illogical approaches to attacks made it much harder to predict or prepare for the incidents, often catching defenders on the back foot."</p> <p>She explains that perhaps due to the group's decentralized structure and crowdsourced decisions, its target profile is all over the place, which means organizations can't operate from the "we're not an interesting target" point of view with actors like LAPSUS\$.</p> <p>Tills adds that it's always hard to say whether a threat group has disappeared, rebranded, or just gone temporarily dormant.</p> <p>"Regardless of whether the group identifying themselves as LAPSUS\$ ever claims another victim, organizations can learn valuable lessons about this type of actor," she says. "Several other extortion-only groups have gained prominence in recent months, likely inspired by LAPSUS\$'s brief and boisterous career."</p> <p>As noted in the report, extortion groups are likely to target cloud environments, which often contain sensitive, valuable information that extortion groups seek.</p> <p>"They are also often misconfigured in ways that offer attackers access to such information with lower permissions," Tills adds. "Organizations must ensure their cloud environments are configured with least-privilege principles and institute robust monitoring for suspect behavior."</p>

As with many threat actors, she says, social engineering remains a reliable tactic for extortion groups, and the first step many organizations will need to take is assuming they could be a target.

"After that, robust practices like multifactor and passwordless authentication are critical," she explains. "Organizations must also continuously assess for and remediate known-exploited vulnerabilities, particularly on virtual private network products, Remote Desktop Protocol, and Active Directory."

She adds that while initial access was typically achieved through social engineering, legacy vulnerabilities are invaluable to threat actors when seeking to elevate their privileges and move laterally through systems to gain access to the most sensitive information they can find.

LAPSUS\$ Members Likely Still Active

Just because LAPSUS\$ has been quiet for months does not mean the group is suddenly defunct. Cybercrime groups often go dark to stay out of the spotlight, recruit new members, and refine their TTPs. "We would not be surprised to see LAPSUS\$ resurface in the future, possibly under a different name in an effort to distance themselves from the infamy of the LAPSUS\$ name," says Brad Crompton, director of intelligence for Intel 471's Shared Services.

He explains that even though LAPSUS\$ group members have been arrested, he believes the group's communication channels will stay operational and that many businesses will be targeted by threat actors once affiliated with the group.

"Additionally, we may also see these previous LAPSUS\$ group members develop new TTPs or potentially create spinoffs of the group with trusted group members," he says. "However, these are unlikely to be public groups and will probably enact a higher degree of operational security, unlike their predecessors."

Money as the Main Motivator

Casey Ellis, founder and CTO at Bugcrowd, a crowdsourced cybersecurity provider, explains that cybercriminals are motivated by money while nation-states are motivated by national goals. So, while LAPSUS\$ isn't playing by the rules, its actions are somewhat predictable.

"The most dangerous aspect, in my opinion, is that most organizations have spent the last five or more years developing symmetric defensive strategies based on threat actors with reasonably well-defined definitions and goals," he says. "When a chaotic threat actor is introduced into the mix, the game tilts and becomes asymmetric, and my main concern about LAPSUS\$ and other similar actors is that defenders haven't really been preparing for this type of threat for quite some time."

He points out LAPSUS\$ relies heavily on social engineering to gain an initial foothold, so assessing your organization's readiness to social engineering threats, both on the human training and technical control levels, is a prudent precaution to take here.

Ellis says while the stated goals of LAPSUS\$ and Anonymous/Antisec/Lulzsec are very different, he believes they will behave similarly in the future as threat actors.

He says the evolution of Anonymous in the early 2010s saw various subgroups and actors rise to prominence, then fade away, only to be replaced by others that replicated and doubled down on successful techniques.

"Perhaps LAPSUS\$ has vanished completely and forever," he says, "but, as a defender, I wouldn't rely on this as my primary defensive strategy against this type of chaotic threat."

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HEADLINE	07/20 Feds recoup \$500K Maui ransomware gang
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/feds-recoup-500k-maui-ransomware

GIST	<p>Two healthcare companies — one in Kansas and another in Colorado — are about to have about \$500,000 in combined ransomware payments returned, after the Department of Justice was able to follow a cryptocurrency trail back to Maui operators and seize the extorted funds.</p> <p>The Federal Bureau of Investigation seized the Maui-connected cryptocurrency accounts back in May and is now working through the courts with the Department of Justice to return the money to its victims. Maui is a strain of ransomware with ties to the North Korean state that focuses its crippling cyberattacks on healthcare and public health organizations.</p> <p>The returned ransom success story is meant to serve as a signal to other targeted organizations that working with law enforcement following a cybersecurity incident is "good business," Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department's National Security Division said in a statement about the court filing.</p> <p>"The FBI is dedicated to working with our federal and private sector partners to disrupt nation-state actors who pose a critical cyber-threat to the American people," FBI Cyber Division Assistant Director Bryan Vorndran said about the recovered Maui ransomware payments. "We will continue to pursue these malicious cyber-actors, such as these North Korean hackers, who threaten the American public regardless of where they may be and work to successfully retrieve ransom payments where possible."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 DHS 'shocking amount' phone tracking data
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/dhs-surveillance-phone-tracking-data/
GIST	<p>FOR YEARS, PEOPLE have wondered not if, but how much, the Department of Homeland Security accesses mobile location data to monitor US citizens. This week, the American Civil Liberties Union released thousands of heavily redacted pages of documents that provide a “glimpse” of how DHS agencies came to leverage “a shocking amount” of location data, apparently purchasing data without following proper protocols to ensure they had the authority to do so.</p> <p>Documents were shared with the ACLU “over the course of the last year through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit.” Then Politico got access and released a report confirming that DHS contracted with two surveillance companies, Babel Street and Venntel, to scour hundreds of millions of cell phones from 2017 to 2019 and access “more than 336,000 location data points across North America.” The collection of emails, contracts, spreadsheets, and presentation slides provide evidence that “the Trump administration's immigration enforcers used mobile location data to track people's movements on a larger scale than previously known,” and the practice has continued under Biden due to a contract that didn't expire until 2021.</p> <p>The majority of the new information details an extensive contract DHS made with Venntel, a data broker that says it sells mobile location data to solve “the world's most challenging problems.” In documents, US Customs and Border Patrol said Venntel's location data helped them improve immigration enforcement and investigations into human trafficking and narcotics.</p> <p>It's still unclear whether the practice was legal, but a DHS privacy officer was worried enough about privacy and legal concerns that DHS was ordered to “stop all projects involving Venntel data” in June 2019. It seems that the privacy and legal teams, however, came to an agreement on use terms, because the purchase of location data has since resumed, with Immigration and Customs Enforcement signing a new Venntel contract last winter that runs through June 2023.</p> <p>The ACLU still describes the practice as “shadowy,” saying that DHS agencies still owed them more documents that would further show how they are “sidestepping” the “Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable government searches and seizures by buying access to, and using, huge volumes of people's cell phone location information quietly extracted from smartphone apps.” Of particular concern, the ACLU also noted that an email from DHS's senior director of privacy compliance confirmed that DHS “appeared to have purchased access to Venntel even though a required Privacy Threshold Assessment was never approved.”</p>

DHS did not comment on the Politico story, and neither the DHS agencies mentioned nor the ACLU immediately responded to Ars' request for comment.

The ACLU says that no laws currently prevent data sales to the government, but that could change soon. The ACLU endorses a bill called the [Fourth Amendment Is Not for Sale Act](#), which is designed to do just that. Even if that bill is passed, though, the new law would still provide some exceptions that would allow government agencies to continue tracking mobile location data. The ACLU did not immediately respond to comment on any concerns about those exceptions.

How to Stop Location Data Tracking

The main question being debated is whether [a Supreme Court decision](#) in 2017 that said police must have a warrant to search cell phone data applies to government agencies like DHS. It's [a gray area](#), the Congressional Research Service says, because “the Supreme Court has long recognized that the government may conduct routine inspections and searches of individuals entering at the US border without a warrant” and that “some federal courts have applied the 'border search exception' to allow relatively limited, manual searches at the border of electronic devices such as computers and cell phones.”

DHS isn't the only government agency that considers itself an exception, though. In 2021, [the Defense Intelligence Agency also purchased location data without a warrant](#), bypassing the 2017 Supreme Court decision because the Department of Defense has its own "Attorney General-approved data handling requirements."

It's all part of a troubling pattern that shows a growing [preference for the practice across many government agencies](#) that have considered themselves exempt from legal concerns over the past few years.

Now, as [privacy concerns over data tracking](#) by law enforcement [have heightened](#) in [post-Roe v. Wade America](#), more mobile phone users are considering ways to keep their data private.

The first step for many might be to stop sharing location data with untrustworthy apps or maybe even entirely. Any time an app asks to track location data, users can either opt in or out. The ACLU told Politico that this opt-in process is what gives third-party vendors like Venntel the right to grant government access to data, claiming users have given permission to share with the government just by opting in.

“It's very clear that when people are doing that, they're not expecting that that's going to be potentially creating this massive database of their entire location history that's available to the government at any time,” Shreya Tewari, the Brennan fellow for the ACLU's Speech, Privacy and Technology Project, told Politico.

For mobile phone users concerned about DHS data tracking, users can specifically [opt out of Venntel data collection](#).

There's not enough information identifying other contracts DHS might have with other vendors selling location data. The ACLU did not comment on the next steps to retrieve the rest of the DHS documents the organization requested, but its initial FOIA request asked for all contracts “concerning government access to or receipt of data from commercial databases containing cell phone location information.” That information may come in a future document dump, as the ACLU lawsuit states, but history proves DHS is not always prompt to respond. The ACLU waited nine months for a response before suing and noted at that time that “DHS has even refused to provide its [legal memorandum](#) about these practices to [US senators](#) who have requested it.”

The Fourth Amendment Is Not for Sale Act was introduced in Congress in April last year, where it was read twice and then referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. A request for an update on the bill's

	progress from one of its most vocal authors, Senator Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, did not yield an immediate response. The ACLU advises that officials act sooner rather than later, saying, "Lawmakers must seize the opportunity to end this massive privacy invasion without delay. Each day without action only allows the government's covert trove of our personal information to grow."
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HEADLINE	07/20 Mall gunman posted plans on 4chan?
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/epzxba/indiana-mall-gunman-4chan
GIST	<p>Hours before a 20-year-old gunman opened fire on a food court in a suburban mall near Indianapolis on Sunday, he appears to have posted a grim message on the notorious imageboard site 4chan.</p> <p>"Name is jonathan and today seems like a good day to die," he wrote. The post was accompanied by a colorized image of a wedding in Nazi Germany. He also shared a link to the image-hosting site Imgur, which contained several images of himself wearing a white button-down shirt, blue jeans, a face-covering, and posing with two AR-15-style rifles, a handgun, and multiple magazines.</p> <p>That post was shared on July 17 at 1:13 p.m. (the site lists no time zone) to the website's /BANT board—which is its International/Random board. Just before 6 p.m. local time the gunman, identified as Jonathan Sapiroman, walked out of the Greenwood Park Mall's food court restrooms armed with the same type and number of weapons as seen in the photo and began shooting into the crowd with an assault rifle (specifically, a Sig Sauer model M400 5.56). He killed three people and injured two more. Less than 30 seconds after his rampage began, a civilian shot him dead from over 40 yards away with a handgun.</p> <p>Police have not yet identified any clear motive in the attack. At a press conference Monday, they said the shooter had left his laptop in a heated oven, alongside a can of butane, and submerged his cellphone in the toilet. Police did not speculate on the reasons the shooter did this but said investigators were trying to acquire as much information from the damaged devices as they could. The FBI took the damaged laptop to their lab in Quantico for further analysis. Police told VICE News that they were familiar with the comments and images purportedly posted by the gunman prior to the attack.</p> <p>Meanwhile, an apparently leaked image from the crime scene has further complicated matters.</p> <p>VICE News asked Greenwood Police about a sensitive, graphic photo, apparently taken inside the mall, and uploaded to 4chan on Tuesday. The picture purports to show the deceased gunman lying on the floor of the mall alongside a placard identifying him as "dead." The police chief did not dispute the image's authenticity, and said that they were investigating where it came from. The dead body is wearing the same clothes as the person who posted on 4chan linking to the Imgur album.</p> <p>Evidence of the shooter's presence on 4chan first began circulating online Monday, raising questions about his motive. The infamous anonymous imageboard site has been linked to a slew of ideologically motivated killings in recent years. The imageboard site was a primary source of radicalization for the 18-year-old who killed 10 people in a racist attack on a Buffalo supermarket earlier this year, according to the vitriolic screed he'd posted online prior to the shooting.</p> <p>The man who killed 51 people in an attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019 also said that he frequented 4chan. The man who killed 10 people in a misogyny-inspired Toronto van attack said he frequented the site as well. In the weeks before the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, 4chan was awash with violent rhetoric and threats against lawmakers, Congressional investigators said at a recent hearing.</p> <p>Despite 4chan's reputation as a cesspool for violence and hate, Fox News' Tucker Carlson recently praised it as "kind of the website of last resort for people who want to get information out there but can't because everything is so completely censored at this point."</p> <p>Blyth Crawford, a radicalization researcher who has long researched 4chan, told VICE World News that the site is popular among extremists and violent actors for several reasons. To begin, the site is incredibly lax in its moderation, meaning that users can easily distribute graphic images, spew hate, and make violent</p>

threats. Popular posts are often archived or reshared, which can expand the reach of particularly problematic content, including “manifestos.”

On top of that, some corners of the site are steeped in a “mass shooting culture”, “where violent actors, particularly those who kill a lot of people, are immortalized and revered on the site,” Crawford said.

“This means that there is a large aesthetic appeal for using 4chan or a similar chan site to announce an attack,” said Crawford. “By aligning themselves with this mass shooter subculture and emulating past shooters who have announced their attacks on chan sites, they are effectively positioning themselves to potentially become regarded as ‘saints’ online as well, providing them with personal glory within a community that might be very important to them, and also acting as a new aspirational figure that can be used to radicalize others.”

The relationship between 4chan and the Greenwood Park Mall shooting became even murkier after the attack, but not because of further actions by the shooter.

On Tuesday, a graphic image showing the deceased shooter surfaced online.

The photo showed the young man, in the same white button-down shirt and blue jeans he’d worn in his earlier posts, covered in blood, surrounded by empty bullet casings, lying dead on a tiled floor.

Next to the shoes of the corpse is a small placard with the word “dead,” indicative of a crime scene. The photo was posted several times to 4chan on Tuesday around noon EST. The first post was simply accompanied by the caption “MALL GUY HAHAAH!” and a follow-up caption. It was later re-shared with the caption “he ded.” It was also posted at a similar time to the Mass Killers subreddit with the caption “don’t know if this has been posted I live really close to greenwood and buddy sent me this.” It is unknown if the image originated on 4chan or Reddit or was taken from a separate site; reverse image searches turned up nothing.

Because of the similarity of the clothing, VICE News was able to use this image to verify the gunman’s 4chan posts. We also matched the tiles surrounding him to those seen in the Greenwood Park Mall food court’s restroom, which was where police said the gunman had been shot. (In a recording of scanner traffic that day, police are also heard describing the shooter as wearing a “white shirt”).

But the image also raised troubling questions about who may have had access to images from such a sensitive crime scene, and why that person chose 4chan to share them.

When VICE News contacted Greenwood Park Police on Tuesday, Detective Doug Mullins said he was familiar with the gunman’s 4chan posts prior to the shooting but was not aware of the image showing his corpse. On Wednesday, Police Chief James Ison told VICE News in a statement that they were “currently working to identify the source” of the image, and that it was under investigation.

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	07/20 Tenn. woman jailed 66mo. for terror support
SOURCE	https://www.newschannel5.com/news/sparta-woman-sentenced-with-concealing-material-support-intended-for-terrorist-organization
GIST	<p>SPARTA, Tenn. (WTVF) — A Sparta woman has been sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison for concealing material support intended for a foreign terrorist organization.</p> <p>37-year-old Georgianna A.M. Giampietro was indicted in August 2019 on charges of attempting to provide these materials to Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. Information provided in January 2022 charged her with the concealment of the support and resources.</p>

According to court documents, Giampietro had conversations in September 2018 with an undercover agent who expressed interest in traveling to Syria to join the designated Foreign Terrorist Organization.

The agent told Giampietro that her husband swore an oath of allegiance to HTS and that he intended to fight on behalf of HTS.

U.S. Attorney's Office, Giampietro initially provided instruction and advice to the individual on how to travel to Syria and avoid detection by law enforcement.

This advice included actions that she and her husband should take before the trip such as severing ties in advance, acquiring new phones, etc.

Giampietro also offered to communicate with her own contacts on their behalf to help them in safely traveling to Syria.

Court documents detail that Giampietro asked the undercover agent if she considered traveling to Afghanistan after being told by her contact that there was presently no jihad in Syria.

Not only did she provide the agent with information that would assist her and her husband, while providing contact information, Giampietro was aware that HTS was a designated terrorist organization and believed the individuals were going to work under the direction of the organization.

She also intended that the agent and her husband would provide funds to the contact which would make its way to HTS. This was providing material support to HTS disguised as a charitable contribution.

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HEADLINE	07/20 FBI eco-terrorism investigations 1980-1990s
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/3adbd8/fbi-terrorism-docs-show-agency-investigated-greenpeace-other-environmental-organizations
GIST	<p>The FBI investigated multiple environmental movements as cases of domestic ecoterrorism, according to documents obtained by Motherboard. The documents name groups like Greenpeace, Earth First!, and the Earth Liberation Front, and detail actions from scrawling “ELF” into the side of a diesel tank to shooting flares at a nuclear power plant.</p> <p>Motherboard obtained the documents using a Freedom of Information Act request; in some cases, it took the FBI four years to provide the documents. They pertain primarily to the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s, but have new relevance considering that some environmentalists have called for direct action to prevent or reverse the worst effects from climate change. The documents show how the FBI treated direct-action environmental organizations, and show what sorts of things the government considered to be "terrorism."</p> <p>The FBI provided Motherboard with more than 100 pages of documents about Greenpeace, one of the most famous environmental organizations in the world. Most of these documents are from the 1970s and 1980s; the FBI says that the group should be monitored for causing "civil unrest."</p> <p>Other write-ups by the FBI alert terrorism-investigating divisions of the federal government about a mock attack on Illinois’s Zion Nuclear Power Plant in 1982 by one Greenpeace chapter. The document states that various videos showing flares being shot towards the plant had been distributed to media, and that the following day, the group had called a press conference to claim responsibility. They stated that they had done it to point out the plant’s vulnerabilities to a real attack.</p> <p>Soon after that incident, Greenpeace disavowed that chapter of the organization and shut it down. The FBI has previously said that Greenpeace was improperly put on an agency terrorism watchlist. Other environmental and animal rights groups have also been improperly associated with terrorism.</p>

A spokesperson for Greenpeace denounced the FBI's investigations into them. "We are not aware of anything from the FBI that labels Greenpeace USA an ecoterrorist organization, which we most certainly are not and never have been," they said. "Greenpeace USA has a 50-year tradition and track-record of peaceful, non-violent civil disobedience." They noted that because the documents were 40 years old, they were not representative of the organization today.

Other documents obtained by Motherboard relate to Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front.

Earth First!, which the FBI said was usually considered to be the "most radical" of the environmental movements, discussed bombing some Weyerhaeuser paper mills—and the cars of the officials who ran the mills—for polluting the Columbia river with dioxin, according to the documents. A person calling themselves the movement's regional representative wrote an extortion letter to the Secretary of the Interior at the time, claiming that if the wilderness was not left alone, the group would engage in civil disobedience.

The FBI said the movement was a "criminal enterprise," and filed it under cases of domestic terrorism.

The FBI [defines ecoterrorism](#) as "the use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally-oriented, subnational group for environmental-political reasons." Though there were not any instances in the documents we received of criminal actions against people, property damage was very common.

Earth First! cut bolts which were securing the pylons of a ski resort's chair lift, demanding that the trees be allowed to grow back, one document states. The Earth Liberation Front (or ELF), another movement with no organizational structure, claimed multiple acts of arson, including one \$50 million fire in San Diego, which was then the "largest act of environmental sabotage in US history."

The FBI noted numerous times in the documents that they were not investigating the movements, but rather individuals associated with them. But the public didn't seem to think so.

A letter protesting the investigation of Earth First! writes, "The Bureau's gestapo-like planting of covert agents within the Earth First! organization itself is an intolerable destruction of the civil liberties and privacy of the American public. To squelch dissent is to kill democracy." A second letter reads, "The FBI's job is to catch criminals—not to harass, intimidate, and arrest legitimate political activists." One political activist, Peter Young, agrees.

"That's the rhetoric they've used going back to the 90s when I got involved," said Young, who associates himself with the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). When he was younger, he was arrested for cutting a fence to release mink from a fur farm in Wisconsin, and served two years' time after being charged with [animal enterprise terrorism](#). "I've been called a terrorist since I was 19."

It was at that age that Young first got involved in animal activism, but he felt that it was lacking and ineffective. So, he started doing direct action on behalf of the ALF—cutting fences to release animals, or stealing equipment from slaughter houses.

Young told Motherboard he would not label himself a terrorist, but that he's not surprised that the FBI did. He said that, especially post-9/11, the agency had a "mandate" to fight the war on terror harder than before.

"If you don't have a terrorist to fight, you have to make one up," he said. "I think it's very convenient for the FBI to start to expand the definition of terrorism."

A spokesperson for the Earth First! Journal, which documents the movement's actions but isn't directly involved with them, agreed with Young's idea. They wrote in an email to Motherboard, "The FBI has an extensive history when it comes to labeling activist groups as terrorists and eliminating their leaders to ensure that radical social and ecological change does not threaten the State's power in any way."

	<p>It's worth noting that, compared to the acts listed in the FBI documents, some of these groups seem a lot more tame. ELF, for example, was investigated for arson—the movement's website has articles with titles like, "What can you do with the wine you have not finished?"</p> <p>For Greenpeace, too, direct action is a "last resort," according to Rolf Skar, a campaign organizer for the group.</p> <p>"[Direct action] doesn't come out of nowhere," said Skar. "If we're doing our jobs right, we'd rather sit down and talk first." He added that the organization focuses more on legal battles and petitioning than street-level work.</p> <p>"Legal tactics can be very effective," said Young. "If you had the resources of a large group behind you, or you just had a lot of money, or connections, legal means of change can be highly effective."</p> <p>But he notes that not everyone has those kinds of resources. And if you don't, but you still want to make a difference, he said, "The most effective thing you can do is pick a target and figure out how you're going to sabotage it."</p>
Return to Top	<i>Click on source link to view documents</i>

HEADLINE	07/20 IS launches new Tajik propaganda network
SOURCE	https://eurasianet.org/islamic-state-launches-new-tajik-propaganda-network
GIST	<p>It might have seemed like a setback for Islamic State in Afghanistan when Yusuf Tajiki, a prominent Tajik-speaking propagandist, was reportedly killed this month by the Taliban.</p> <p>But fighting militants is a game of whack-a-mole and Yusuf Tajiki is already being eclipsed by a parallel outlet targeting the same audience: Al-Azaim Tajiki. Islamic State Khurasan Province's magazine has recognized Al-Azaim as part of its central propaganda network, endorsing it in a tribute to Abu Muhammad al-Tajiki, the Tajikistan-born suicide bomber who attacked Kabul's Sikh temple in June.</p> <p>In line with its recent rocket assaults on Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, ISKP has intensified its hostile rhetoric against post-Soviet Central Asia's authoritarian leaders. With Al-Azaim on Telegram, the group has ramped up efforts to broaden appeal among speakers of Central Asian languages, promising new attacks weekly.</p> <p>As a clue to ISKP's northward intentions, the emergence of a designated Tajik-language media outlet showcases the terror group's attempt to segment its audiences. Al-Azaim now spearheads ISKP outreach among Tajik speakers, while its operatives are closely linked to a large online pro-Islamic State network stretching from Afghanistan to Syria.</p> <p>These supportive Tajik Telegram groups include Protectors of the Ummat, Devotion and Loyalty, and Islamic Book House, among others. Al-Azaim is also sometimes recommended, and invitation links are shared, by pro-ISKP channels in other languages, such as Pashto.</p> <p>Al-Azaim's discussion channels also share administrators with the Sadoi Shaykh Telegram channel. Both have identified one "Valid Umarov" – said to be a Tajikistan-born member of the Taliban that had infiltrated ISKP – as orchestrating Yusuf Tajiki's death. Al-Azaim's unique reporting on his death further affirms its knowledge of battleground developments in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Al-Azaim has distinguished itself by rapidly building a network of Telegram channels that post Tajik translations of official Islamic State media claims. It hosts multiple discussion channels for Tajik-speaking ISKP supporters and publishes original content.</p>

The discussion groups add a more organic and interactive human element, facilitating an intimate setting for Tajik IS sympathizers to share and talk about religious content, regional and international affairs, as well as Islamic State videos and the latest organizational news.

More recently, Al-Azaim has been sharing Islamic State history lessons with its followers and has been posting early IS videos translated into Tajik and Russian.

Though Al-Azaim is a shadowy network that takes security precautions seriously, there are a few regular figures that appear central to the campaign, perhaps most notably those identifying themselves as “Abu Maytuha” and “I’lam Tajiki.” (I’lam means “media” in Arabic.)

Abu Maytuha was an administrator for the original [Protectors of the Ummat](#) discussion group that recruited for ISKP and [raised money using Russian banks for IS families](#) in Syrian detention camps. He was likewise involved with the associated Tajik Telegram channel [Movarounnahr](#), which has since been disabled. He remains a member of Protectors of Ummah and other channels and his posts on Al-Azaim are regularly shared on the aligned Sadoi Shaykh channel. This suggests at minimum a level of coordination with the Sadoi Shaykh administrators, but it could also mean that Al-Azaim has created Sadoi Shaykh to get ahead of blocks by Telegram.

The group’s second admin, I’lam Tajiki, primarily promotes the services of [I’lam Foundation](#), which is the leading translation and distribution channel for Islamic State propaganda. Likewise, to ensure that followers are not lost when, inevitably, Telegram suspends channels, Al-Azaim released an instructional video on how to download the secure TOR browser and access the Tajik section of I’lam’s dark web platform.

The logic is clear, and it is not new. With the rise of ISKP in multiple provinces of Afghanistan, Al-Azaim and I’lam aim to turn more Tajik sympathizers into recruits. In this way they are mimicking Islamic State’s strategy during its heyday in Iraq and Syria between 2014-2017 by driving targeted propaganda to new regional audiences.

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HEADLINE	07/21 Nigeria: ‘Chibok girl’ 8yrs after kidnapping
SOURCE	https://africa.cgtn.com/2022/07/21/nigeria-finds-chibok-girl-eight-years-after-kidnapping/
GIST	<p>The Nigerian army has found another one of the so-called “Chibok girls” who were kidnapped by Boko Haram eight years ago. The recovery is the third in recent weeks, military officials said Wednesday.</p> <p>Christopher Musa, the commander of troops in the region, presented 24-year-old Ruth Bitrus, along with her two-year-old son to journalists in front of a military barracks.</p> <p>Bitrus was among 276 schoolgirls aged 12-17 who were abducted from their boarding school in Chibok, northeastern Nigeria in 2014.</p> <p>Their plight sparked a global campaign under the hashtag “BringBackOurGirls”.</p> <p>Musa did not say when Bitrus was found.</p> <p>The young woman, who was 16 when she was kidnapped, escaped at night and walked for three days through the bush before reaching the town of Bama and approaching troops.</p> <p>“I have been looking for a way to escape (from) the very day we were kidnapped,” she told reporters at the ceremony, carrying her child in her arms.</p> <p>“I was forced to convert to Islam and married to a man with whom I had this child.”</p> <p>Last month, two other “Chibok girls” were found separately after fleeing the Sambisa Forest, a significant hideout for jihadists.</p>

	<p>Of the 276 schoolgirls abducted in 2014, 57 had managed to escape, and another 80 had been exchanged for Boko Haram commanders in negotiations with the authorities.</p> <p>Other girls were later found, but more than a hundred remain missing.</p> <p>According to propaganda videos, many were forced into marriage.</p> <p>Since the kidnapping, many other schools and universities have been attacked in northern Nigeria in recent years, some by militants, but mostly by criminal groups which engage in mass kidnapping for ransom.</p> <p>The militant insurgency in the northeast has lasted 13 years, leaving 40,000 dead and 2.2 million displaced.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 UN: AQ, IS gaining strength in Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://www.dawn.com/news/1700764
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD: Transnational terrorist groups Al Qaeda and the self-proclaimed Islamic State are growing in strength in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and could potentially pose threat for the outside world, a recently launched United Nations report warned.</p> <p>The 30th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, set up under UNSC Resolutions 1526 and 2253, has taken a look at the activities of Al Qaeda, the militant Islamic State (IS) group and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan and the wider region and concluded that Al Qaeda and IS's threat remains high in conflict-hit regions and the neighbouring countries though both of these terrorist groups could attempt to strike in non-conflict areas.</p> <p>Though the report covered the activities of the terrorist groups in different parts of the world, but Afghanistan, which hosts one of IS's most thriving networks and Al Qaeda, has been of special interest especially in view of Taliban takeover, whose first anniversary will be observed next month.</p> <p>"The situation in Afghanistan remains complex," the report noted, adding that terrorist groups based in Afghanistan view Taliban's military success as a "motivating factor" for propaganda in neighbouring countries and other parts of the world.</p> <p>Al Qaeda and IS pose varying level of threats to international peace. IS-Khorasan, the group's Afghanistan-based chapter, is being seen as a bigger threat in the short and medium term, while Al Qaeda is a danger over the long term.</p> <p>Sanaullah Ghafari alias Shahab al-Muhajir, an Afghan national, has been leading IS-K chapter since June 2020.</p> <p>However, IS core has set up a separate structure called Al-Siddiq office under Sheikh Tamim al-Kurdi alias Abu Ahmed al-Madani for pursuing the group's regional agenda.</p> <p>The report says IS views Afghanistan as a base for expansion in the wider region for the realisation of its "great caliphate" project and is trying to recruit fighters from other terrorist groups, besides luring disaffected Taliban fighters and dissatisfied local ethnic minorities. The group, moreover, attracts fighters by offering higher wages than other militant groups operating there.</p> <p>IS-K, the report points out, has increased its presence in northern and eastern Afghanistan. The group that initially started by recruiting members of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Afghan Taliban now has in its ranks fighters from Central Asia, who have increased activities in the north, which borders Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.</p>

In April, IS-K claimed to have fired rockets into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Both countries denied having been hit by those rockets, but the report cautions that risk of such attacks remain.

Citing an unnamed member state, the report further warns that if IS-K expands towards east, which borders Pakistan, then it could acquire a “global threat capability” from Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda, meanwhile, is enjoying a comfortable stay in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime and some of its senior cadres are providing advisory services to the de facto government there.

“Al Qaeda leadership reportedly plays an advisory role with the Taliban, and the groups remain close,” the report states.

Aiman al-Zawahiri in Afghanistan

It, moreover, confirms that Al Qaeda chief Aiman al-Zawahiri is living in Afghanistan and communicating freely.

The proof that Al-Zawahiri was alive comes from the video messages issued by the group. “Al-Zawahiri’s apparent increased comfort and ability to communicate has coincided with the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan and the consolidation of power of key Al Qaeda allies within their de facto administration,” it maintains.

Al Qaeda’s traditional strongholds in Afghanistan have been in the south and east of the war-ravaged country, but recently it appeared to be expanding its footprint to the west to the Farah and Herat provinces and possibly to the north.

The report underscores that Al Qaeda is not an immediate international threat from its safe haven in Afghanistan because it lacks an external operational capability and does not currently wish to cause the Taliban international difficulty or embarrassment.

TTP, which is currently holding peace talks with Pakistan government, is said to be the largest grouping of foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan, with a strength of 3,000 to 4,000 fighters. In one of the member state’s assessment, TTP is now more cohesive and presents a greater threat to the region.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Al-Shabab attacks Somali border towns
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/al-shabab-attacks-somali-towns-close-to-ethiopian-border-/6667670.html
GIST	<p>Heavy fighting was reported Wednesday after al-Shabab militants attacked two Somali towns along the border with Ethiopia.</p> <p>Regional officials who confirmed the attack with VOA Somali said militants clashed with Liyu police, members of Ethiopia’s controversial paramilitary forces that have long been present in Somalia’s southwestern Bakool region towns of Yeed and Aato.</p> <p>Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) operating in Somalia as part of a bilateral security deal between Ethiopia and Somalia rely on Liyu police for border protection and supply route safety and logistics.</p> <p>A security official who requested anonymity because he is not allowed to speak with media told VOA’s Somali Service that al-Shabab first attacked a Liyu police camp in Aato town; a local Bakool region official confirmed the al-Shabab then carried out a second attack on Yeed, where militants again entered a Liyu police encampment.</p> <p>Militants later attacked Washaaqo village with mortars, possibly to disrupt Liyu police reinforcements from arriving on the scene. Yeed and Aato are within 80 kilometers of each other, while Washaaqo is slightly further inside Somalia.</p>

	<p>Casualties are not yet known. Telephone networks in the area had been down most of Wednesday.</p> <p>Al-Shabab spokesperson Abdulaziz Abu Mus'ab claimed the group's fighters captured both Yeed and Aato.</p> <p>All three Somali towns have hosted a large presence of Liyu police that hail from Ethiopia's eastern Somali Region for many years.</p> <p>ENDF has nearly 4,000 soldiers serving as part of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. Ethiopia is also thought to have several thousand additional special police that operate in Somalia based on an agreement with the Somali government.</p> <p>This latest al-Shabab attack comes as Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre on Wednesday said the government is determined to launch a "forceful and comprehensive" fight to counter al-Shabab and Islamic State militants through "military and non-military means" in order to reopen the main supply routes for humanitarian efforts, commercial activities and free movement of people.</p> <p>Barre did not give a timeline of the operations against al-Shabab. Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who assumed office in May, recently announced a new strategy to fight al-Shabab comprising military, ideological and economic components.</p> <p>Ahmed Umar Abu Ubaidah, al-Shabab's leader, vowed in a new audio recording to fight the new government, asserting the group will "never allow a government that is not founded upon Islam and an administration that doesn't fully implement Sharia [law]."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 ISIS: US mass shootings 'divine retribution'
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/isis-calls-alarming-surge-in-u-s-mass-shootings-tit-for-tat/
GIST	<p>An ISIS magazine called mass shootings and other gun violence in America an "'unwanted' population control program" that, despite the motives of white supremacist or grievance-driven domestic shooters, is divine retribution for the U.S. war on terror.</p> <p>In the new 53-page issue of <i>Voice of Khurasan</i> published by ISIS-Khorasan, an article titled "American Boomerang" begins by declaring "tit for tat."</p> <p>Calling America a place "where everyone exercises rights for enjoying pseudo freedom" that "also comes up with a price, sometimes too high for the American laymen to pay for," ISIS-K says that price "is known as 'American gun culture'" as the article posts graphics showing the rise in gun deaths from 2014 to 2021 as well as a ranking of the country's deadliest mass shootings.</p> <p>Much of the article focuses on U.S. foreign policy and civilian deaths in conflicts such as Vietnam and Iraq, and slams the war on terror while calling domestic gun violence "the most severe security crisis America has been facing — on its soil."</p> <p>"The recent shooting incidences in America show an alarming surge with no possibility of slowing down soon," the magazine continued. "...As of June 14th, a total of 19,723 Americans died by guns from all causes: homicide, suicide, and accident. That's about 119 per day, or five per hour, shot dead by a firearm."</p> <p>ISIS-K goes on to cite an FBI report on active-shooter incidents in the United States along with gun casualty data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "These figures are too alarming for a country, having highest military expenditure, aimed at establishing worldwide peace, leaving own home vulnerable to gun related holocaust," the article states. "These figures are also surprisingly higher than a war torn country in the modern world."</p>

ISIS-K cites the motives of a few mass shooters — including “the professional gambler, massacring 60 at a Las Vegas resort hotel” who “might be the seeker of ‘some sort of infamy.’”

Ironically, ISIS originally claimed through multiple official and affiliated media channels, including their Amaq News Agency and the group’s weekly *al-Naba* newsletter, that the shooter who attacked the Vegas music festival in 2017 was one of their own. ISIS persisted for months in their claim that Stephen Paddock had recently converted to Islam, went by “Abu Abdul Barr al-Amriki,” and “carried out the attack in response to calls for targeting coalition countries.” By the time investigators discovered he had no known fidelity to any religion or ideological movement, ISIS had widely disseminated their disinformation in what was likely a bid to try to inspire followers to commit similar-style attacks.

“US experts may also pinpoint proliferation of violent video games, drug addiction, frustration, boredom (despite the revolution in the entertainment industry), complexities in the family matters, and so on,” ISIS-K says in the article. “However, the most of the US ‘high paid’ think tanks have drawn conclusion that the proliferation and availability of guns on the soil is the root cause for gun related deaths. But they can’t suggest a practical way of coming out of this vicious cycle.”

The terror group finally revealed their ideological motive in expressing concern about mass shootings committed by perpetrators other than their own operatives, declaring that America “never considered that their pointless war on Islam, in the name of ‘war on terror,’ will be answered in a divinely dictated way, when a shooter having nothing to do with Islam and ‘radicalization’ (in their words) welcomes a mass gathering of US civilians with several rounds of automatic rifle, scoring death toll like the ‘zombies’ do in video games.”

“The Americans will be paid back in such a divine way, from the Lord of the worlds, until they step back from their bellicose foreign policy,” the article concludes. “Besides, they should never forget that the reckoning in the hands of the mujahidin upon the truth is still remaining until the Khilafah soldiers invade their land, which is thousands of miles away from the conflict zones, and offer them unpleasant payback.”

In a May [issue](#), the magazine invoked recent hot-button elements of the culture war and talking points arising from debate over issues including sex education, LGBT acceptance and the teaching of evolution as the group argued that “democracy and all that emanates from it is retarded and perverse” and attempted to woo recruits to their extremism.

“These democracies teach children, as young as six, about sex and sexually transmitted diseases as part of their curriculum, together with drug abuse in order to prevent the new generation from being influenced by the widespread ills of their societies,” the ISIS-K article said. “There is a culture of free mixing in the educational institutions where they are encouraged to learn, try and test sexual activities between themselves. Homosexuality is taught as something that is normal and part of the genetic makeup and that we should be tolerant of people of such tendencies. The education is secular taught from the angle of atheism using insane and refuted ideas, such as evolution, to try and fill the void.”

“Do you really want to live in a society that has no bounds allowing and tolerating all possible views and practices?” the terror group said in the article’s conclusion.

The fifth issues of *Voice of Khurasan* [declared](#) that disseminating disinformation is a “duty” of jihadists in order to deceive and ultimately divide their foes and should be considered “part of the war policy.” Deploying different types of weaponry is critical for “demonstrating strength,” ISIS argued, as is “spreading rumors to strike fear into the heart of the enemy.”

In their third issue, ISIS-K [declared](#) that a concerted focus on “social media warfare” is critical to advance on the ideological battlefield but also in order to counter the pull of “enchanted” social media influencers. *Voice of Khurasan* was first published in February, with a 37-page inaugural issue. The page counts have varied since then, with the fourth issue just 10 pages long and the current issue up to 24 pages.

	In that first issue , the group declared that theirs is the “most important province” of ISIS after Iraq and Syria. The magazine furthered the long-running ISIS narrative that the loss of the group’s claimed caliphate in Iraq and Syria is “temporary,” adding that “although we lost the Khilafah territory and thousands of Mujahideen were martyred in a period of 5 years, there is no problem.”
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HEADLINE	07/20 Accelerationist guide: mass attack migrants
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/crusius-style-mass-attacks-on-migrants-urged-as-final-solution-in-accelerationist-guide/
GIST	<p>On the heels of the latest National Terrorism Advisory System warning about the potential for domestic extremist violence spurred by migration flows at the southwest border, a neo-Nazi accelerationist online e-book released last week calls for mass murder of migrants including unaccompanied minors as their “final solution” to the border crisis.</p> <p>The last update of the National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin, released in early June, warned that changes in policies related to border enforcement could be used to “justify violence” against minority communities or border enforcement personnel.</p> <p>“Some domestic violent extremists have expressed grievances related to their perception that the U.S. government is unwilling or unable to secure the U.S.-Mexico border and have called for violence to stem the flow of undocumented migrants to the United States,” the bulletin stated. “We assess that there is increased risk of domestic violent extremists using changes in border security-related policies and/or enforcement mechanisms to justify violence against individuals, such as minorities and law enforcement officials involved in the enforcement of border security.”</p> <p>The 261-page guide claiming to be the product of 100 authors and circulated among extremist channels on Telegram is a mix of ideological declarations and tactical advice combining accelerationism, neo-Nazism, and ecofascism while at its core attempting to drive extremists to commit violent acts — including against critical infrastructure and communities of color — in order to hasten societal downfall and benefit white supremacists.</p> <p>“Your solution to this problem involves deportation. Mine involves ball bearings. We are not the same,” said a message on one page next to a photo of the September encampment of thousands of largely Haitian refugees gathered under the Del Rio International Bridge. The background image was of a bag full of ball bearings, which can be used as shrapnel in homemade explosive devices such as the pressure-cooker bombs used in the 2013 Boston Marathon attack.</p> <p>Forty-seven pages later, a full page discussing deportation advocates emulating the 2019 El Paso Walmart mass shooting in order to drive away migrants.</p> <p>Deportation, said the guide, is “impractical and unrealistic,” claiming that migrants “start getting uppity” during the process. “The ideal form of repatriation is getting the alien populations on board. How? The secret ingredient is terror,” the text continues. “Imagine, if you will, a Crusius-style attack” on an establishment at which migrants are present “every week. A sniper shooting every day, slowly taking its toll.”</p> <p>Crusius, who is set to face trial in January 2024 on charges of killing 23 people in the Walmart attack, is credited as penning a manifesto posted on 8chan before the attack in which the author claimed to have driven 650 miles to wage the attack on the border city in response to the “Hispanic invasion of Texas.” He is hailed on a July neo-Nazi “saints” calendar circulating on Telegram that bestows the title upon killers who are white, committed a deliberate violent act in support of white supremacists’ worldview, and kill at least one person.</p> <p>The accelerationist guide also advocates terrorizing migrant populations with acts of harassment and vandalism, including setting off fireworks next to farmworkers’ living quarters and “Spanish translations</p>

crossed out.” It said that those terrorizing the migrants can then commandeer vehicles to “carry them back over the border.”

“Much easier, quicker and cleaner than killing them all — though there’ll still have to be plenty of that up front before this is feasible,” the guide added.

At the bottom of the page is a photo of a Border Patrol agent on horseback confronting the Haitian migrants at the bank of the Rio Grande on Sept. 19. U.S. Customs and Border Protection has [referred](#) four agents to a Discipline Review Board over the incident.

Another page in the guide titled “Border Crisis” decried Border Patrol for sheltering and feeding apprehended migrants, and branded those entering the country without legal status “non-persons” who “won’t be missed.”

“Could getting away with murder be any easier?” the guide stated, encouraging border property owners to “become the final solution to our border crisis” and “open fire indiscriminately” on migrants crossing their land instead of calling Border Patrol, and “eradicate them all — men, pregnant women, unaccompanied minors, entire families, and of course the human traffickers.”

The NTAS bulletin noted that “threat actors have recently mobilized to violence due to factors such as personal grievances, reactions to current events, and adherence to violent extremist ideologies, including racially or ethnically motivated or anti-government/anti-authority violent extremism... we continue to assess that the primary threat of mass casualty violence in the United States stems from lone offenders and small groups motivated by a range of ideological beliefs and/or personal grievances.”

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HEADLINE	07/20 Turkey warplanes strike Iraq resort
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/20/world/middleeast/turkey-iraq-tourists-killed.html
GIST	<p>ZAKHO, Iraq — Turkish warplanes struck a vacation resort in northern Iraq on Wednesday, killing at least eight people and injuring more than 23, according to government and hospital officials.</p> <p>The attack, by at least four missiles, took place in Parakh, a village in Dohuk Province, in the semiautonomous Kurdish region near the Turkish border. Turkey’s armed forces regularly launch strikes into northern Iraq to target Kurdish militants who take refuge there.</p> <p>Ordinarily, those attacks are directed at training camps operated by the Kurdish Workers Party, the P.K.K., which has been engaged in a long-running guerrilla war in southeastern Turkey.</p> <p>“One again, the Turkish Forces committed an explicit and blatant violation of the sovereignty of Iraq and the lives and security of Iraq citizens,” Iraq’s prime minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, said in a statement posted to Twitter hours after the attack.</p> <p>“This brutal attack underscored the fact that Turkey ignored Iraq’s continuous demands to refrain from military violation against Iraqi territory and the lives of its people,” he said.</p> <p>Mr. al-Kadhimi said Iraq reserved its “full right to respond” and would hold the “aggressors” accountable.</p> <p>Turkey’s foreign ministry suggested that the attack had been carried out by the P.K.K.</p> <p>“It is considered that such attacks, which aim at innocent civilians and are assessed to be organized by the terrorist organization, target our country’s just and determined stance in the fight against terrorism,” the ministry said in a statement. “Turkey is ready to take all steps to reveal the truth.”</p>

The mountainous resort caters to Iraqis, many from the southern part of the country, seeking to escape the intense heat in the summer months. The dead and wounded were evacuated to Bedar General Hospital in the city of Zakho.

Witnesses to the attack who were taken to the hospital roamed its halls frantically, many barefoot, searching for family and friends. They described traumatic scenes at the bombing site.

“It was chaos — tourists’ hands and legs were detached from their bodies,” said Ahmad Tahseen Ali, 30, from Babil Province, who said he was standing about 20 meters from one of the strikes, which wounded his brother and sister, Ban al-Humnrani, 42, who is a U.S. citizen and was visiting from Sacramento, Calif. “We are used to hearing sounds of war, but I have never seen a horrific scene like this,” said Ms. al-Humnrani, who suffered a leg wound.

The P.K.K. has been waging a separatist campaign against the Turkish government in Ankara since the 1970s. The conflict has killed more than 40,000 people, most of them in Turkey. The P.K.K. is regarded as a terrorist group by the United States and Europe.

A U.S. State Department spokesman, Ned Price, emphasized in a briefing that “military action in Iraq should respect Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity.” The State Department, he said, would “continue to monitor the situation closely as additional information emerges.”

Many P.K.K. fighters and much of the group’s leadership take refuge in the mountains where the borders of Iraq, Iran and Turkey meet. While the fighting inside Turkey has diminished in ferocity, the Turkish military has continued to cross into Iraq to strike P.K.K. targets.

Iraqi leaders do not formally give sanctuary to P.K.K. fighters, but only rarely take action against them. In April, Turkey began an offensive, named Operation Claw Lock, in northern Iraq. Turkish officials typically invoke Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes a state’s “inherent right of individual or collective self-defense” against attack, without seeking approval from the Iraqi government first.

“The Turkish side is carrying out continuous violations that are not based on any legal basis or agreement between the two countries,” Ahmed al-Sahaf, Iraq’s foreign minister, told the Iraqi News Agency in April.

The Turkish airstrikes came as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey responded to criticism of his decision to launch a new military offensive against Kurdish fighters in Syria. In that case, Mr. Erdogan said the operation was part of an effort to keep Turkey’s border with Syria secure from Kurdish militants and to create a safe zone for some of the millions of Syrian refugees who have fled the civil war in their own country in recent years.

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HEADLINE	07/19 Africa is ground zero jihadi terror groups
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/africa-new-ground-zero-jihadi-terror-groups-experts
GIST	<p>JOHANNESBURG, South Africa – Africa has been beset by jihadi violence, and it is something the U.S. will need to pay close attention to, observers warn.</p> <p>On Sunday, a U.S. airstrike killed two al-Shabab terrorists in response to an attack carried out against U.S. partner forces in Somalia.</p> <p>"The Islamic Jihad in Africa is real," claims Jasmine Opperman, South Africa based security consultant specializing in extremism and political violence, who believes Africa has taken over from the Middle East as the jihadis main area of operations.</p> <p>"It definitely is the case", Opperman told Fox News Digital. "If one looks at the history of Africa, I'm going into Mali and the West Africa region, Somalia, the East Africa region, the Democratic Republic of</p>

the Congo and Mozambique, we are seeing that al-Qaeda has always had an entrenched presence in Africa. We are seeing an environment conducive for these [international terror groups](#) to find themselves, embed themselves and take the lead in extremist activities in all of these regions."

Earlier this month, Nigeria's most secure prison was overrun by jihadis, even though the Nigerian Minister of the Interior Rauf Aregbesola said Kuje Prison is a world-class facility and "the most fortified in the country".

However, a platoon of the Nigerian army "with sophisticated weapons" were no match when an Islamist jihadi movement decided to spring over 60 terrorists jailed there. The jihadis came to the jail located in the nation's capital, Abuja, in three waves, attacking the facility for over two hours with over 300 militants, some firing rocket propelled grenades, one unit dedicated to blowing open the prison's walls and another group taking up defensive positions in surrounding streets to prevent the army from sending in reinforcements.

Christopher Holton, director of the State Outreach Center for Security Policy, told Fox News Digital that the U.S. needs to pay close attention to what is happening in Africa.

"Historically, when jihadists are allowed a safe haven, they simply use it as a base of operations to spread jihad elsewhere. The example of al-Qaeda launching the September 11 attacks from Afghanistan and the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings from Sudan are instructive."

Holton concluded that, "Two of the most deadly jihadist groups in the world operate exclusively in Africa: Boko Haram and al-Shabab."

In East Africa, [the jihadi group al-Shabab](#), created 15 years ago in an already turbulent Somalia, have become poster boys of the jihad revolution with their flamboyant attacks on a U.S. air base in Mandla Bay, Kenya; the overrunning of a Kenyan army camp, killing 200; an attack on a Kenyan college campus which killed 148 people; the deadly siege of the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, where at least 67 died; and enormous World War II - size bombings in Mogadishu, Somalia.

In May, President Biden reversed President Trump's decision to pull U.S. troops out of Somalia and put back an estimated 500, after there was a spike in al-Shabab activities.

"The decision to reintroduce a persistent presence was made to maximize the safety and effectiveness of our forces and enable them to provide more efficient support to our partners," A U.S. National Security spokesperson stated. Special Forces personnel are claimed to be mostly advisers. However, it is known the U.S. does deploy drones to target jihadi leaders in-country, although whether the drones are flown long-range from the U.S. base in Djibouti is not known.

Opperman believes the huge growth of Islamist militancy across the continent is driven by common factors - weak governance, and often rural communities who have been neglected by governments and have lost trust in the system that should be protecting them.

The Boko Haram jihadi group jumped into the international spotlight when their members kidnapped 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, North-Eastern Nigeria in 2014.

Over 2 million people have fled their homes to escape [Boko Haram in Nigeria](#) alone, according to the U.N. Nearly 800,000 more have been displaced in the neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Those captured have been forced to convert to Islam, and the women often turned into sex slaves.

However, for this jihadi group, things are changing. "Boko Haram is not the same as we have seen a few years back", says Opperman. "Many of the fighters crossed over to the Islamic State West Africa province, (ISWAP) and we are seeing the ISWAP now even reaching into the Abuja area, the capital of Nigeria. It's this geographical expansion as far as Abuja that remains a concern."

As soon as Nigerian authorities catch jihadi militants, a high proportion of them are put back into operation by their colleagues. There have been 15 assisted jailbreaks in the last seven years, helping 7,000 inmates to escape.

A little further north in Niger, the new French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna and Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu reportedly signed a new agreement that will see French troops withdrawing from Mali with 1,000 of them setting up base in Niger equipped with fighter jets, drones and helicopters. Up to 400 more troops will engage in Special Operations on the borders of Burkina Faso and Mali, and an additional 700 to 1,000 personnel will be based in Chad. All of them, in this Sahel Region, will continue facing off both Islamic State and [Al Qaeda-affiliated jihadis](#) who have made this the most dangerous peacekeeping destination in the world.

Paris has had its troops in Mali, a former French colony, for nine years. However, their redeployment comes in the wake of a near doubling in violence in the Sahel in 2021, from 1,180 to 2,005 incidents. ReliefWeb states this was the most significant change in any of the theaters of Islamist violence in Africa this past year.

More than 2.7 million people have been forced to flee their homes in the Sahel, and at least 13.4 million are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, according to the U.N.

With reports of Russian mercenaries now operating in Mali, Opperman is concerned that the U.S., already present with drones and special forces in the area, will be sucked into a confrontation here with Moscow: "We are seeing currently the tensions between France and Russia," says Opperman. "France on the way out and Russia trying to move in. And this leaves a question: if we are going to see some United States expansion within the region."

[In Mozambique, jihadis are on a roll](#), where some 4,000 people have been killed, and more than 800,000 forced from their homes - and they are pushing South. The group, also known as al-Shabab, has warned South Africa to get its troops out of Mozambique, or they will attack this neighboring country, less than 1,500 miles from the conflict. Jasmine Opperman believes it is a question of when rather than if the jihadis will attack Johannesburg:

"No country border is a stumbling block for terrorists," concludes Opperman: "The global expansion, the extremist jihadist ideology, demands of them to ever push the borders beyond what they believe will at the end of the day lead to a new world order and a new caliphate."

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HEADLINE	07/19 AQ top terror group among jihadists?
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/al-qaida-positioned-to-surpass-islamic-state-among-jihadis-/6665672.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Al-Qaida, boosted by leadership stability and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, appears to be positioning itself to once again be seen as the world's preeminent terror group and as the greatest long-term threat to the West.</p> <p>Intelligence shared by United Nations member states and published in a new report Tuesday, finds al-Qaida is enjoying a degree of freedom under Taliban rule that has allowed its leadership to communicate more often and more easily with affiliates and followers, and sell itself as a more attractive option than its rival, the Islamic State terror group, also known as IS, ISIS or ISIL.</p> <p>"The international context is favorable to al-Qaida, which intends to be recognized again as the leader of global jihad," according to the U.N. report.</p> <p>"Al-Qaida propaganda is now better developed to compete with ISIL as the key actor in inspiring the international threat environment, and it may ultimately become a greater source of directed threat," the report added, noting that IS "has suffered a rapid succession of leadership losses since October 2019, with an as yet unknown impact on its operational health."</p>

The report further concludes that al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, long rumored to be in ill health or dying, is "alive and communicating freely."

The intelligence shared by U.N. member states also concludes al-Qaida has cemented its leadership team in order of seniority, with Zawahiri being followed by Saif al-Adel, long seen as his likely successor, Yazid Mebrak with al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQIP), and by Ahmed Diriye with al-Qaida's Somali affiliate al-Shabab.

At least one U.N. member state intelligence agency said al-Qaida now appears to favor its African affiliates over al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), a potentially monumental shift given AQAP's history of plotting attacks against the West, like the December 2019 shooting at the U.S. Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida.

The intelligence findings also suggests that al-Shabab, in particular, may be gaining financial leverage, with one U.N. member state reporting that the Somalia-based affiliate is using some of its \$50 million to \$100 million in yearly revenue to directly support al-Qaida's core leadership.

An 'underestimated' al-Qaida

"It is entirely clear that Zawahiri has been shamefully underestimated," Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, a counterterrorism analyst and the CEO of threat analysis firm Valens Global, told VOA. "Al-Qaida is a stronger organization today by far than when Zawahiri first took the reins."

Other analysts say the U.N. report calls into question the long-term effectiveness of U.S. and Western counterterrorism strategies.

"Even after 20 years, some of al-Qaida's most senior operatives remain at large and are ready to carry on the mantle of jihad," Katherine Zimmerman, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, told VOA.

"Al-Qaida's bench remains deep even after serious attrition," she texted. "The next generation has now been fighting for 20 years ... they are just as experienced (and perhaps with lessons-learned) as OBL [Osama bin Laden], Zawahiri, and Saif al Adel were on 9/11."

A renewed threat?

But there are questions as to when and whether al-Qaida's core leadership will push for renewed attacks against the West.

"Attacking the U.S. is not the be-all and end-all for al-Qaida," Gartenstein-Ross said. "For the past decade or so, it has deprioritized 9/11 style attacks against the United States for a variety of reasons, including that al-Qaida enjoys many more opportunities within the region."

The U.N. report similarly cautions that while al-Qaida may be better positioned, it is likely to refrain from launching external attacks in order not to embarrass Afghanistan's Taliban rulers and because the al-Qaida core still lacks "an external operational capability."

U.N. member state intelligence agencies, in contrast, view the threat from Islamic State as immediate despite a series of operations by the U.S. and others that have whittled away at the group's senior leadership.

U.N. member states, according to the report, "observed no significant change of direction for the group or its operations in the core conflict zone."

IS, which still commands 6,000 to 10,000 fighters across Syria and Iraq, "remains a resilient and persistent threat owing to its decentralized structure and ability to organize complex attacks."

The report further finds that IS has developed a network of nine regional offices – in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Somalia, Africa's Lake Chad Basin, Libya, Yemen, and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula – "to sustain the group's global capability and reputation."

Intelligence from various member states indicates some of the offices are "a work in progress."

The Turkey-based office, known as al-Faruq, is mostly defunct following a series of key arrests by Turkish authorities. IS offices in Libya, Yemen and the Sinai are likewise described, for the moment, as "low-functioning or moribund."

But U.N. member state intelligence suggests IS' offices in Afghanistan, Somalia and the Lake Chad Basin are functioning well.

The al-Karrar office in Somalia, for example, appears to have become a key financial hub for IS despite the terror group's limited presence in the country, moving funds from Yemen to Afghanistan to help buy weapons and pay the salaries of IS fighters in multiple locations.

Islamic State leadership

U.N. member states, though, have not resolved the question of who is leading IS following the death of its previous leader in February.

The report says intelligence agencies have coalesced around three possibilities for the identity of the man known by the nom de guerre Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.

Iraqi national Bashar Khattab Ghazal al-Sumaida'i is "cited as the most likely candidate," according to the report. The other likely candidates are Juma'a Awwad Ibrahim al-Badri, the brother or former IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and Abd al-Raouf al-Muhajir, who led the IS general directorate of provinces.

In May, Turkish officials claimed to have captured the new IS leader during a raid in Istanbul.

Intelligence shared by some U.N. member states for the report suggested that the official captured by Turkish authorities is likely al-Sumaida'i.

Neither U.S. nor Western counterterrorism officials have publicly confirmed the Turkish claims, but multiple officials speaking to VOA on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss intelligence have said the person in custody is a senior IS official.

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HEADLINE	07/20 UN report: human rights in Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://unama.unmissions.org/un-releases-report-human-rights-afghanistan-taliban-takeover
GIST	<p>KABUL - The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today released a report (<i>Human rights in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021 – 15 June 2022</i>) outlining the human rights situation in Afghanistan over the 10 months since the Taliban takeover.</p> <p>The report summarises UNAMA's findings with regards to the protection of civilians, extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, fundamental freedoms and the situation in places of detention. The report also contains recommendations to both the <i>de facto</i> authorities and the international community.</p> <p>Despite an overall, significant reduction in armed violence, between mid-August 2021 and mid-June 2022, UNAMA recorded 2106 civilian casualties (700 killed, 1406 wounded). The majority of civilian casualties were attributed to targeted attacks by the armed group self-identified "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province" against ethnic and religious minority communities in places where they go to school, worship and go about their daily lives.</p>

“It is beyond time for all Afghans to be able to live in peace and rebuild their lives after 20 years of armed conflict. Our monitoring reveals that despite the improved security situation since 15 August, the people of Afghanistan, in particular women and girls, are deprived of the full enjoyment of their human rights,” said Markus Potzel, Acting Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan.

While the *de facto* authorities have taken some steps seemingly aimed at the protection and promotion of human rights, such as the amnesty for former government officials and security force members, the 3 December decree on women’s rights and a code of conduct relating to prisoners, they also bear responsibility for a broad range of human rights violations.

The erosion of women’s rights has been one of the most notable aspects of the *de facto* administration to date. Since 15 August, women and girls have progressively had their rights to fully participate in education, the workplace and other aspects of public and daily life restricted and in many cases completely taken away. The decision not to allow girls to return to secondary school means that a generation of girls will not complete their full 12 years of basic education. At the same time, access to justice for victims of gender-based violence has been limited by the dissolution of dedicated reporting pathways, justice mechanisms and shelters.

“The education and participation of women and girls in public life is fundamental to any modern society. The relegation of women and girls to the home denies Afghanistan the benefit of the significant contributions they have to offer. Education for all is not only a basic human right, it is the key to progress and development of a nation,” said the UN envoy.

On 17 August 2021, the *de facto* authorities announced an amnesty for former government officials and Afghan National Security and Defense Force members. This amnesty does not, however, appear to have been consistently upheld, with UNAMA recording at least 160 extrajudicial killings of former government and security officials by members of the *de facto* authorities between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022.

UNAMA is concerned about the impunity with which members of the *de facto* authorities appear to have carried out human rights violations. UNAMA’s report details extrajudicial killings of individuals accused of affiliation with armed groups, as well as cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments and extrajudicial killings of individuals accused of “moral” crimes and the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials. Human rights violations must be investigated by the *de facto* authorities, perpetrators held accountable, and ultimately, incidents should be prevented from reoccurring in the future.

UNAMA’s report highlights specific concerns with respect to two bodies within the *de facto* authorities – the *de facto* Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (*Amr bil Maruf*) and the *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence (*Istikhbarat*). Many of the directives issued by the *de facto* Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice limit the human rights and freedoms of Afghans, in particular women and girls. Although such directives are said to be recommendatory in nature, at times members of the *de facto* authorities have taken a harsh stance on their implementation, including carrying out physical punishments for alleged infringements of their directives.

Officials of *de facto Istikhbarat* have been identified for their particularly severe treatment of people deprived of their liberty. UNAMA’s report details instances where the *de facto Istikhbarat* was involved in perpetrating human rights violations against individuals in their custody, including extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, as well as arbitrary arrests and detentions.

In the 10 months since they took control of Afghanistan, the *de facto* authorities have made clear their position on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. They have limited dissent by cracking down on protests and curbing media freedoms, including by arbitrarily arresting journalists, protestors and civil society activists and issuing restrictions on media outlets.

“The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion are not only fundamental freedoms, they are necessary for the development and progression of a nation. They allow

meaningful debate to flourish, also benefiting those who govern by allowing them to better understand the issues and problems facing the population,” said Fiona Frazer, UNAMA Chief of Human Rights.

With regards to places of detention: encouragingly, the *de facto* authorities do appear to be seeking to fulfil their obligations in relation to the treatment of detainees, with the Taliban leader having issued guidance on this issue in January 2022. Progress is hindered by financial constraints, resulting at times, in inadequate food, medical care and hygiene supplies for detainees and the cessation of vocational education and training programs for prisoners that were previously funded by the international community.

This is compounded by detainees remaining in extended pre-trial detention in some cases, due to the functioning of the justice system.

The human rights situation has been exacerbated by a nationwide economic, financial and humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale. At least 59% of the population is now in need of humanitarian assistance – an increase of 6 million people compared with the beginning of 2021. UNAMA’s report calls on the international community to continue its support for the people of Afghanistan by ensuring that urgent humanitarian and basic needs are met. Further, the international community has an obligation to ensure that sanctions, while they remain in place, do not have a negative impact on human rights.

The findings and recommendations contained in the report reflect many of the concerns raised by UNAMA with a number of *de facto* entities over the past 10 months. UNAMA has appreciated the level of engagement to date and remains committed to supporting the *de facto* authorities in protecting and promoting the human rights of all Afghan women, men, girls and boys.

“As reflected by the United Nations Security Council in the extension of UNAMA’s mandate, Afghanistan as a state remains party to a number of instruments concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms. With this in mind, I urge the *de facto* authorities to do their utmost to address the concerns outlined in our report and meet their international obligations to protect and promote the human rights of all Afghans,” said Markus Potzel, Acting Secretary General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Key findings for the period 15 August 2021 – 15 June 2022:

Over the reporting period, UNAMA documented:

- **2106 civilian casualties** (700 killed, 1406 wounded) predominantly caused by improvised explosive device (IED) attacks attributed to ISIL-KP and unexploded ordnance (UXO).
- 160 extrajudicial killings, 178 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 23 instances of incommunicado detention and 56 instances of torture and ill-treatment of **former ANDSF and government officials** carried out by the *de facto* authorities.
- 59 extrajudicial killings, 22 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 7 incidents of torture and ill-treatment by the *de facto* authorities of individuals accused of affiliation with **self-identified “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province”**.
- 18 extrajudicial killings, 54 instances of torture and ill-treatment and 113 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and 23 cases of incommunicado detention of individuals accused of **affiliation with self-identified “National Resistance Front”**.
- 217 **instances of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments** carried out by the *de facto* authorities since 15 August 2021
- 118 instances of **excessive use of force** by the *de facto* authorities between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022.
- Human rights violations affecting 173 **journalists and media workers**, 163 of which were attributed to the *de facto* authorities. Among these were 122 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention, 58 instances of ill-treatment, 33 instances of threats and intimidation and 12 instances of incommunicado detention.^[1] Six journalists were also killed during the period (five by self-identified Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province, one by unknown perpetrators).
- Human rights violations affecting 65 **human rights defenders**, 64 of which were attributed to the *de facto* authorities. Among these were 47 arbitrary arrests, 17 cases of incommunicado detention, 10 cases of ill-treatment and 17 cases of threats and intimidation.

Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/20 Portland camp teaches kids to hate cops?
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/portland-summer-camp-kids-hate-police-tear-gas-activists https://nypost.com/2022/07/20/portland-camp-imagines-life-without-cops-features-blm-coloring-book/
GIST	<p>Learning how to make friendship bracelets is so last summer camp.</p> <p>Portland, Oregon's Budding Roses social justice summer camp appears to be teaching kids how to overthrow society instead.</p> <p>Radio host Ari Hoffman revealed on Wednesday on "Fox & Friends First" that kids who attend this camp will not only learn how to "hate the police" — but how to become all around "little activists."</p> <p>Hoffman indicated that the camp uses specific Black Lives Matter curriculum — the same materials used in Seattle Public Schools that replaced Martin Luther King Jr. with "Marxist activists" and "hyper-sexualized education."</p> <p>"Your child, if they go to this Antifa camp, will be taught how to be a little activist," he said.</p> <p>"They'll be taught how to deal with tear gas, how to protest," he said.</p> <p>"That's what these parents are sending their kids to," he said.</p> <p>The Budding Rose curriculum includes teaching kids how to handle being sprayed with tear gas, learning from indigenous land maps and priming on police abolition.</p> <p>It also reportedly includes a White supremacy reflection series and a BLM coloring book.</p> <p>Hoffman described how Antifa rioters "think they're untouchable" after taking "control" of Portland ever since the BLM protests in the summer of 2020.</p> <p>"Thanks to their efforts to help defund the police, and the politicians in Portland who followed up on that initiative — you now have crime spiking through the roof," he said.</p> <hr/> <p>A far-left volunteer group in Portland, Oregon, is offering "a free, radical social justice camp" that has promoted Black Lives Matter-themed material, taught indigenous land maps and called for the abolishment of police in past summers.</p> <p>Budding Roses is hosting the two-week camp that will explore "social justice issues, youth leadership and arts activism" for kids in fourth through eighth grades from July 25 to Aug. 5. The previous two years were held virtually — as youngsters discussed race, gender and youth activism in the wake of the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.</p> <p>The group's curriculum for the coming session is unclear, but it's 2020 camp curriculum featured a "Black Lives Matter At School" coloring book and a "What is Police Abolition" section that imagined communities without cops.</p> <p>"How can we keep each other safe?" the group's website reads. "What does a world without police look like?"</p>

Budding Roses' GoFundMe page says camp activities also include "talk about racism, gentrification, student activism, gender, climate change, and mental health – issues that Portland youth are already engaging with."

The camp's website contains information from a "Tear Gas for Portlanders" publication and usage of the irritant by Portland cops during the fervent summer 2020 protests.

"Learn about what tear gas is, how it was used in Portland, and ways to keep yourself safe if you get tear gassed," the site states.

The camp's 2020 curriculum also contained a section on teaching budding anarchists how protest using songs and drum.

"They are a way to express anger, our joy and our power," according to Budding Roses' website. "Write your own songs and make your own protest drum too!"

Radio host Ari Hoffman said he was shocked they didn't offer a course on Molotov cocktails, but noted how the camp's participants are being shaped into "little activists," [Fox News reported](#).

"What they do learn is how to hate the police," Hoffman told the network Wednesday. "Your child, if they go to this Antifa camp, will be taught how to be a little activist. They'll be taught how to deal with tear gas, how to protest – that's what parents are sending their kids to."

Campers were previously shown videos and materials detailing "White Supremacy Reflection," an "Indigenous Land Map" and a history of "radical organizing" in Portland.

"Our goal was to promote collective problem solving on issues of policing, abolition, and community safety by providing supplies and guidance to our campers," Budding Roses' website reads.

The camp was founded as a project of Black Rose/Rosa Negra Anarchist Foundation, [according to its website](#).

"We believe in empowerment through education, while also understanding that mainstream education often reproduces structural oppression and disempowers youth, particularly low income and youth of color," the website continues.

Multiple messages seeking comment from Budding Roses were not returned Wednesday. The camp's [Facebook page](#), which was active earlier in the day, was no longer visible as of Wednesday afternoon.

Hoffman, an associate editor at The Post Millennial, claims Antifa and other far-left antifascist advocates have a firm grip on Portland since taking over the city during the BLM protests two summers ago.

"Portland right now is controlled by Antifa," Hoffman told Fox News. "They defunded their police, you still have riots on a regular basis, you still have protests on a regular basis. And these people think that they've won."

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HEADLINE	07/20 Summer of lost luggage crisis mounts
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/jul/20/global-lost-luggage-crisis-mounts
GIST	When Jenn Choi packed her and her family's bags she feared for the worst. After hearing horror stories of checked airline luggage going permanently missing, she bought tracking devices for her suitcases to ensure she would not have to rely on a critically understaffed aviation industry facing what could be its worst meltdown in history.

Lo and behold, all three of the bags containing the possessions of the self-help coach, her husband and their one-year-old child remained almost 10,000km (6,200 miles) away in Germany when they arrived in Cancun, Mexico, last week.

“Our bags have still not even been found and we will be without them for at least a week,” she says. “I feel like it’s a part of traveling these days as it is becoming so common. Many people here in Mexico are on vacation without their bags. It’s a mess and I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Many families are taking their first holidays in three years this summer due to the pandemic, during which time airlines and airports undertook drastic cost-cutting as demand fell. As passengers return, the amount of luggage being lost by airlines is surging. In April, almost six bags per 1,000 pieces of luggage checked in by passengers [were at least temporarily lost by US airlines](#).

It marked a 67% rise on the same month of 2021 after almost 30,000 flights in, out and within the US were also canceled this summer. The rate of baggage mishandled across the world is also on the rise: up 24% last year, with 8.7 suitcases per 1,000 international passengers [not arriving on time](#).

Claims for stranded luggage have jumped 30% on 2019, [according](#) to insurer Mapfre SA, and amid [high rates of delayed arrivals](#) certain airports [are reportedly](#) seeing a tenfold increase in the amount of luggage arriving on the wrong flights. Elsewhere, some global luggage shipping services are claiming to have seen demand almost triple month-on-month as travelers opt not to check their bags.

Some are calling it the summer of [lost luggage](#) and there are daily stories of baggage claims [swelling](#) as suitcases get caught in a conveyor belt-shaped vortex that only seems to be widening.

The mounting global crisis shows no sign of letting up. On Thursday, Emirates said the industry faced “airmageddon” and pointed the finger at an “incompetent” London Heathrow airport [after it capped](#) daily passenger numbers and urged airlines to stop selling flight tickets unfettered.

Heathrow hit back, following disarray at the airport when hundreds of lost bags [were dumped](#) in a hall to be processed at a later point after the system was overwhelmed. It blamed a lack of ground staff employed by airlines to check in passengers and organize luggage and suggested that carriers were “putting profit ahead of safe and reliable passenger journeys”. Similar cemeteries of lost bags have been witnessed in New York, Washington DC, Dublin, Amsterdam and elsewhere.

Some airlines have policies to compensate spending on replacement clothes and shoes only if the traveler’s luggage takes more than three weeks to return. “No-one is answering the phone,” says Pascal Sigg, whose two-leg flight from Zurich to Portland last week was hit by delays that forced them to stay overnight in London. “We are on a seven-week trip in the US with children aged two and four and we don’t know if we should buy what we need. This mess only gets worse by the hour.”

Due to the systematic problems, Sigg, who is a PhD student and editor, feels as though airlines “have decided to sacrifice luggage for people to make their trips”. But people’s suitcases include items that have “tremendous” sentimental and economic value, he adds. The automated helplines are providing few answers and would-be sight-seers are left in Kafkaesque nightmares as holidays across the world are ruined.

The worldwide fiasco could seemingly have been averted, with rebounding demand for summer air travel long forecast. But after tens of thousands of pilots, cabin crew staff, and airport workers across the world were made redundant due to pandemic bans on international travel, the industry has been slow to rehire.

In Australia, the leading airline, Qantas, is reportedly losing one in 10 bags at the regional hub in Sydney. It is suffering from a shortage of baggage handlers after it outsourced about 1,700 jobs during the pandemic in a decision later found to have been unlawful. There are also strikes in Europe due to working conditions and low pay.

In what it called a “creative” step towards reuniting people with their belongings, Delta – which reported a quarterly profit of \$735m last week – flew a luggage-only plane filled with 1,000 lost bags from the UK to its hub in Detroit. But there remain thousands still estranged from their valuables, essentials and heirlooms amid a shambles that has been unfolding all year.

“I waited three hours at the luggage carousel until the early hours of the morning for a member of airline staff to finally arrive and tell me that there was not even a record of my bag on the system,” says Deborah Sergeant, who had flown from Mexico City to Lima with Copa in February. “She said ‘We’ll look for it and you better stick around here in Lima for a couple of weeks so we can send it to you more easily if it does turn up’. But then I never heard anything.”

Sergeant estimates her gigantic suitcase contained \$1,500 worth of possessions and she has been left severely out of pocket after not being compensated and needing to buy a whole new wardrobe, plus numerous other items. “I was traveling with my whole life,” the teacher adds.

YouTuber Connor Colquhoun and his team are \$50,000 down after two bags of filming gear went missing between Heathrow and Los Angeles in June. “Once we landed they wouldn’t tell us anything,” he says. “We have tried to contact the airline multiple times nearly every single day and we haven’t heard anything. It’s impossible to talk to a real human being.”

When bags do eventually turn up, in some cases, they are [battered and bruised](#). Social media attention helps some people [elicit reimbursements](#) from often otherwise unresponsive helplines. Others have their luggage returned to their home address, but only after days of nail-biting anxiety.

American tourist Donna O’Connor, who traveled to Ireland on 30 June to spread the ashes of her late parents on a family farm, was separated from her bag containing them after a nine-hour delay. “I want them here, that’s why I brought them with me,” she told [the Irish Independent](#).

O’Connor visited Dublin airport every day for a week this month, as opposed to traveling to the west of the country as planned, desperately trying to find the bag containing the precious remains of her parents. “I literally saw over a thousand cases,” [she added](#). After little communication from Air Canada she suddenly received a bittersweet call saying they had sent the ashes back to her Chicago home. “It doesn’t help me to have it back in Illinois,” O’Connor said. “I just feel emotionally spent.”

In part thanks to technological advancements, the number of bags going missing has been on a downward trajectory [over the last 10 years](#), but in 2019 it jumped amid a rise in demand and seven bags per 1,000 were mishandled by US airlines in June that year.

The levels of luggage “mishandled” this year has broadly not yet exceeded [pre-pandemic rates](#), according to the data, until April. But Marc Casto, a travel agency executive from the Americas for Flight Centre Travel Group, expects the data through the summer to reflect a worsening situation.

“A significant number of people will not be reunited with their luggage; very likely more than at any time in history,” he says. “The industry faces more challenges than in any of my 25 years in the sector. Every segment of the travel industry is struggling with labor shortages, from gate agents and baggage handlers to flight attendants and airline pilots.”

Only when airlines and airports undergo an extensive process of hiring and training staff will the issues significantly ease, he predicts. “I sincerely advise all travelers to avoid checking luggage if possible,” Casto warns. Other experts have said to mitigate risk by buying tracking devices and taking photos of valuables inside the bag to help with any future insurance claims.

In news that will assuage some holidaymakers’ concerns, Mapfre SA said on Monday that most lost luggage ends up being returned to their owners, according to analysis of the claims they have received so

	<p>far. The same day, Choi was still yet to receive good news from the airline. But she had noticed on her GPS tracker that her son's bag had arrived in Mexico.</p> <p>"We have already gone shopping for the essentials," she says. "And we may still be without our luggage but we remain full of love and gratitude for this vacation."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/19 Bank hides 500 piggy banks in North Sound
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/north-sound-news/local-bank-hides-500-piggy-banks-with-20-inside-around-north-sound/TFVEM7AKJJGXLAVWW4USXXDZ4/
GIST	<p>A treasure hunt promotion by Peoples Bank has people all over six counties looking for little green pigs.</p> <p>From July 18 to August 1, nearly 500 little green piggy banks will be hidden within 1 mile of Peoples Bank branches across Snohomish, Island, Whatcom, Skagit, Chelan and King counties, all stuffed with \$20 in cash.</p> <p>According to Peoples Bank, the pigs tend to enjoy parks, views and scenic trails.</p> <p>Clues to finding the lost piggies will be made on the bank's Twitter page, like this clue for a pig in Ferndale, under what appears to be children's playground equipment.</p> <p>Peoples Bank says that anyone who finds a pig is welcome to keep the pig and the cash inside.</p> <p>However, people who find a pig and submit a picture of themselves with the pig, are eligible to win the grand prize of \$1,000.</p> <p>People are welcome to find more than one pig, but only one person can win the grand prize.</p>
Return to Top	<i>More information can be found on the Peoples Bank website.</i>

HEADLINE	07/20 Scientists sound alarm: Greenland ice melt
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/20/world/greenland-heat-wave-ice-melting-climate/index.html
GIST	<p>Pituffik, Greenland (CNN)The water off the coast of northwest Greenland is a glass-like calm, but the puddles accumulating on the region's icebergs are a sign that a transformation is underway higher on the ice sheet.</p> <p>Several days of unusually warm weather in northern Greenland have triggered rapid melting, made visible by the rivers of meltwater rushing into the ocean. Temperatures have been running around 60 degrees Fahrenheit -- 10 degrees warmer than normal for this time of year, scientists told CNN.</p> <p>The amount of ice that melted in Greenland between July 15 and 17 alone -- 6 billion tons of water per day -- would be enough to fill 7.2 million Olympic-sized swimming pools, according to data from the US National Snow and Ice Data Center.</p> <p>Put another way, it was enough to cover the entire state of West Virginia with a foot of water.</p> <p>"The northern melt this past week is not normal, looking at 30 to 40 years of climate averages," said Ted Scambos, a senior research scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado. "But melting has been on the increase, and this event was a spike in melt."</p> <p>For the scientists out on the ice sheet, the warmth has been alarming.</p>

"It definitely worries me," said Kutalmis Saylam, a research scientist with the University of Texas who is currently stationed in Greenland. "Yesterday we could wander around in our t-shirts -- that was not really expected."

Each summer, scientists worry that they will see a repeat of the [record melting](#) that [occurred in 2019](#), when 532 billion tons of ice flowed out into the sea. An unexpectedly hot spring and [a July heat wave](#) that year caused almost the entire ice sheet's surface to melt. [Global sea level](#) rose permanently by 1.5 millimeters as a result.

Greenland holds enough ice -- if it all melted -- to [lift sea level by 7.5 meters](#) around the world.

Sea ice is formed when chunks of the Greenland ice sheet break off and flow into the ocean.

The latest research points to a more and more precarious situation on the Northern Hemisphere's most icy island.

"Unprecedented" rates of melting have been observed at the [bottom of the Greenland ice sheet](#), a study published in February found, caused by huge quantities of meltwater trickling down from the surface. This water is particularly concerning because it can destabilize the sheet above it and could lead to a massive, rapid loss of ice.

And in 2020, scientists found that Greenland's ice sheet had melted beyond the point of no return. No efforts to stave off global warming can stop it from eventually disintegrating, said researchers at The Ohio State University. The rate of melting in recent years exceeds anything Greenland has experienced in the last 12,000, [another study found](#) -- and enough to cause [measurable change in the gravitational field](#) over Greenland.

At the East Greenland Ice-core Project -- or EastGRIP -- research camp in northwest Greenland, the work of scientists to understand the impact of climate change is being thwarted by climate change itself.

Aslak Grinsted, a climate scientist at the University of Copenhagen's Niels Bohr Institute, told CNN that they have been trying to get flights into the camp so they can ship out the ice cores they have recently collected. But the warmth is destabilizing the landing site.

"The temperatures we are seeing right now are simply too hot for the ski-equipped planes to land," Grinsted said. "So we store the ice cores in large artificial caves we have made into the snow to protect it from the heat of the summer."

Scientists take advantage of the abnormal warmth while they wait, playing volleyball in their shorts on an ice sheet at the top of the world.

Before human-caused climate change kicked in, temperatures near 32 degrees Fahrenheit there were unheard of. But since the 1980s, this region has warmed by around 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit per decade -- four times faster than the global pace -- making it all the more likely that temperatures will cross the melting threshold.

Grinsted referred the temperatures at the EastGRIP research site as a "heat wave," and noted that global warming is pushing the mercury higher more often.

"Yes, the chance of temperatures getting this hot is clearly linked to global warming," Grinsted said.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Tanzania deadly outbreak leptospirosis
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/tanzania-investigates-deadly-outbreak-mystery-disease/story?id=86870310

LONDON -- A [deadly outbreak](#) of an unknown disease in Tanzania has been identified as leptospirosis, health officials said.

More than 20 cases, including three deaths, have been reported in the southern Lindi region, with patients exhibiting symptoms similar to [Ebola](#) or Marburg virus diseases -- fever, headache, fatigue and bleeding, especially from the nose, according to health officials. Preliminary results from laboratory testing earlier this month had ruled out Ebola and Marburg viruses as well as [COVID-19](#), making the illness [a mystery](#) -- until now.

Tanzanian Health Minister Ummy Mwalimu announced at a press conference Monday that the samples from patients tested positive for leptospirosis, an infectious bacterial disease that affects both animals and humans.

"I would like to inform the public that sample testing from patients has confirmed the outbreak is leptospirosis field fever or 'homa ya Mgunda' as it is known in Swahili," Mwalimu said. "Up to now, no other person among contacts has shown any symptoms of the disease."

The first case of the previously unidentified illness was reported at Mbekenyera Health Center in Lindi region's Mbekenyera village on July 5. Within three days, the hospital had received a second case, according to Tanzania's chief medical officer, Dr. Aifelo Sichalwe, who had urged the public to "remain calm" and advised anyone experiencing similar symptoms to seek medical attention immediately.

Last week, Sichalwe said the Tanzanian Ministry of Health had dispatched a team of experts to Lindi region to investigate the mysterious outbreak and take measures to prevent further spread, such as conducting contact tracing, identifying people with similar symptoms and isolating them. The World Health Organization's teams in Tanzania were also "monitoring the situation closely" and working with the Tanzanian health ministry to get "further testing done to rule out other diseases," Dr. Fiona Braka, team lead for emergency responses at the WHO's regional office for Africa, told ABC News last Friday.

Leptospirosis is transmitted directly or indirectly from animals to humans, mainly when people come into contact with the urine of infected animals or a urine-contaminated environment. The bacteria enters the body through cuts or abrasions on the skin, or through the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose and eyes. Human-to-human transmission is rare, according to the WHO.

Leptospirosis is easily overlooked and relatively little is known about it, the WHO says. Cases occur worldwide but are most common in tropical and subtropical areas with high rainfall. It's a potentially serious but treatable disease with symptoms that may mimic those of a number of unrelated infections, such as influenza, meningitis, hepatitis, dengue or viral haemorrhagic fevers, according to the WHO.

Last Thursday, the WHO warned that Africa is facing a growing risk of outbreaks caused by zoonotic pathogens that originate in non-human animals and then switch species and infect humans. There has been a 63% increase in the number of zoonotic outbreaks in the region in the decade from 2012 to 2022, compared with 2001 to 2011, according to a new analysis by the United Nation's global health arm.

The analysis found that between 2001 and 2022, there were 1,843 substantiated public health events recorded in the WHO African region, of which 30% were zoonotic disease outbreaks. While these numbers have increased over the last two decades, the WHO noted, there was a particular spike in 2019 and 2020 when zoonotic pathogens represented around 50% of public health events. Ebola virus disease and other viral hemorrhagic fevers constitute nearly 70% of these outbreaks, while dengue fever, anthrax, plague, [monkeypox](#) and a range of other diseases make up the remaining 30%, according to the analysis.

"Infections originating in animals and then jumping to humans have been happening for centuries, but the risk of mass infections and deaths had been relatively limited in Africa. Poor transport infrastructure acted as a natural barrier," Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's regional director for Africa, said in a statement on July 14. "However, with improved transportation in Africa, there is an increased threat of zoonotic

	<p>pathogens traveling to large urban centers. We must act now to contain zoonotic diseases before they can cause widespread infections and stop Africa from becoming a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases."</p> <p>The WHO warned that there can be a devastating number of cases and deaths when zoonotic disease arrive in cities, as several West African countries saw with the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak -- the largest and deadliest on record.</p> <p>"We need all hands on deck to prevent and control zoonotic diseases such as Ebola, monkeypox and even other coronaviruses," Moeti added. "Zoonotic diseases are caused by spillover events from animals to humans. Only when we break down the walls between disciplines can we tackle all aspects of the response."</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/20 DOJ: 36 in \$1.2B healthcare fraud schemes
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/07/20/Justice-Department-charges-36-12-billion-healthcare-fraud-schemes/6911658355980/
GIST	<p>July 20 (UPI) -- The U.S. Department of Justice on Wednesday charged three dozen people for allegedly orchestrating healthcare fraud schemes that involved ordering unnecessary or fraudulent medical tests and equipment.</p> <p>The schemes spanned 13 federal districts that defrauded \$1.2 billion in orders of unnecessary telemedicine, cardiovascular and cancer genetic testing as well as durable medical equipment, the Justice Department said in a statement.</p> <p>In addition to the 36 individuals charged, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced it took adverse administrative actions against 52 healthcare providers involved in similar schemes and seized \$8 million in cash, luxury vehicles and other fraud proceeds.</p> <p>"The Department of Justice is committed to prosecuting people who abuse our health care system and exploit telemedicine technologies in fraud and bribery schemes," Assistant Attorney Kenneth A. Polite Jr., of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, said. "This enforcement action demonstrates that the department will do everything in its power to protect the healthcare systems our communities rely on from people looking to defraud them for their own personal gain."</p> <p>Those charged by the Justice Department allegedly used telemedicine to obtain orders for fraudulent or unneeded medical tests that were billed to Medicare and other insurance companies without any interaction with patients in many cases.</p> <p>The fraudulent tests also provided little or no valuable information to the patients or their primary care doctors.</p> <p>Owners and operators of medical laboratories charged in the cases also allegedly paid illegal kickbacks and bribes to telemedicine companies, medical professionals and medical equipment companies in exchange for patient referrals seeking to bolster their business.</p> <p>In one such case, Jamie McNamara, the owner of multiple clinical labs in Missouri, allegedly executed a scheme in which marketing companies paid telemedicine centers to call patients and offer them no-cost, Medicare-approved cardiovascular and genetic testing. A medical professional was then paid to clear the tests regardless of whether they were necessary for the patients.</p>

	<p>McNamara and other co-defendants are also accused of using "shell laboratories" to submit false or unnecessary claims to Medicare for the fraudulent tests and equipment worth more than \$174 million which was laundered through a "complex network" of bank accounts and assets such as luxury vehicles, real estate and a yacht.</p> <p>The Justice Department said that telemedicine schemes account for more than \$1 billion of the total alleged losses associated with the charges.</p> <p>"Fraudsters and scammers take advantage of telemedicine and use it as a platform to orchestrate their criminal schemes," said Luis Quesada, assistant director of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division. "This collaborative law enforcement action shows our dedication to investigating and bringing justice to those who look to exploit our U.S. healthcare system at the expense of patients."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/21 Moscow: US must respect Russia law
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/brittney-griner-sports-basketball-united-states-moscow-e581f43cec6479bba1d71e92be0c3ff3
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (AP) — The spokesperson for Russia’s Foreign Ministry lashed out Thursday at the United States characterizing basketball star Brittney Griner’s jailing on drug charges as “wrongful detention,” saying it shows disrespect for Russian law.</p> <p>Griner has been jailed since she was arrested in mid-February at a Moscow airport after vape canisters containing cannabis oil were found in her luggage. The Phoenix Mercury standout and two-time Olympic gold medalist acknowledged in court this month that she had the canisters, but said she had no intent to break the law.</p> <p>She faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted. Her trial is scheduled to resume Tuesday.</p> <p>The State Department in May designated Griner as wrongfully detained, moving her case under the supervision of its special presidential envoy for hostage affairs - effectively, the government’s chief hostage negotiator.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Thursday that the legalization of cannabis for medical and recreational use in parts of the U.S. has no bearing on what happens in Russia.</p> <p>“If a U.S. citizen was taken in connection with the fact that she was smuggling drugs, and she does not deny this, then this should be commensurate with our Russian, local laws, and not with those adopted in San Francisco, New York and Washington,” Zakharova said.</p> <p>“You understand, if drugs are legalized in the United States, in a number of states, and this is done for a long time, and now the whole country will become drug-addicted, this does not mean that all other countries are following the same path,” she added.</p> <p>Russian media have persistently speculated that Griner could be exchanged for prominent Russian arms trader Viktor Bout, who is imprisoned in the United States, and that Paul Whelan, an American imprisoned in Russia for espionage, may also figure in an exchange.</p> <p>U.S. officials have not commented on the prospects for such a trade. Russian officials have said no exchange could be discussed until the conclusion of the legal proceedings against Griner. It is unclear how long the trial will last, but a court has authorized Griner’s detention until Dec. 20.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Man w/39 arrests back on streets after 1 day
SOURCE	https://katu.com/news/local/man-with-nearly-40-arrests-back-on-streets-1-day-after-being-arrested-for-motorcycle-theft

GIST

SEATTLE — A repeat offender with nearly 40 arrests is back on the streets just one day after deputies arrested him for stealing a motorcycle.

The motorcycle previously belonged to a retired Seattle police officer. It was stolen last year from the yard of its new owner.

Once the pride of the fleet, Derek Lee's motorcycle is back with its owner, but now in shameful condition after thieves defaced it.

"It's pretty incredible to see it again," Lee said. "Definitely not the way I wanted to see it again."

Lee bought the pearl white Harley from a retired Seattle police officer, but the motorcycle, with a \$20,000 value, was snatched from his West Seattle home a year ago.

"They took some time to cover up any identification where it said 'Harley Davidson' and police from the factory, they painted over anything like that," he said.

Then on Sunday, he got a call that King County Sheriff's Office deputies recovered it.

Deputies say the suspect, Terry Couveau, 52, was pulled over for a warrant while riding the stolen bike on the 2600 block of South 188th in SeaTac.

Lee said the suspect was even wearing the motorcycle vest he had since he was 16 years old.

"It really grabs your guts and squeezes them, you know," Lee said.

According to records, Couveau was booked in jail, but a day later, after his first appearance before a judge, he was released.

Couveau's criminal history shows he has been arrested 39 times, has six felony convictions for robbery, burglary and residential burglary and seven gross misdemeanor convictions.

"They're catering to these criminals, and nothing gets done for the victims," Lee said. "After 24 hours, they're back on the street, stealing somebody else's motorcycle, and unfortunately there are a lot of victims out there."

The latest numbers from the Auto Theft Task Force shows vehicle thefts in 2022 are still way above 2021 and 2020.

According to the Washington State Association of Police Chiefs and Sheriffs, 26,520 vehicles were stolen in 2020 and 31,032 were taken last year.

If the current trend continues, the association projects more than 50,000 vehicles will be stolen by the end of the year.

COVID-19 restrictions on jail bookings and new restrictions on police chases for motor vehicle theft have been blamed for the spike.

"Without repercussions, it's going to continue and it's going to get worse," Lee said.

The suspect faces a felony possession of stolen property charge.

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HEADLINE 07/20 WASPC: murders up, police staffing down

SOURCE <https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Murders-up-police-staffing-way-down-in-17318372.php>

SEATTLE (AP) — The number of murders, robberies, serious assaults and other violent crimes rose significantly in Washington last year while the number of officers available to respond to them continued to plummet, the head of the organization that collects the data said Wednesday.

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs released its annual report on crime, finding that violent crime overall increased 12.3%.

Although the murder rate — 4 per 100,000 residents — was slightly higher in the late 1980s and early '90s, the number of murders — 325 — was the most since the association started tracking the data in 1980. It was up from 302 in 2020 and 201 before the pandemic in 2019; the national murder rate also soared in 2020.

Meanwhile there were 495 fewer police employed in the state, which already had the nation's fewest officers per capita, said Steve Strachan, the association's executive director. That left Washington with 10,736 full-time officers, a drop of 4.4%, to serve a population that rose 116,000 to more than 7.7 million.

Washington's police staffing rate was 1.38 officers per 1,000 residents, well below the national average of 2.33 reported by the FBI. Washington would need almost 7,400 more officers to hit that mark, Strachan said.

"Nobody should be OK with where we are right now," Strachan said during an online news conference. "Reduced staffing means — this is the most important point, really — less ability to provide justice for victims."

Many police departments across the country, from Atlanta to Portland, Oregon, have struggled with staffing shortages prompted by retirements and resignations amid the pandemic and racial justice protests that made the agencies a target of budget cuts.

In Washington, some officers have also complained that police reform efforts passed by the Legislature in 2021 in response to the police murder of George Floyd, restricting when and how police can use force, went too far.

The remaining officers have been stretched thin — responding to one call after another, with less time for behavioral health outreach or follow-up investigation, Strachan said. It also makes it more difficult for police to de-escalate volatile situations, which can involve teaming up with other officers and slowing down how they respond.

That leads to burnout and further departures, he said.

Gov. Jay Inslee called the report "disturbing" but stressed that other states are facing similar issues with police staffing. He noted that the Washington Legislature had recently increased the pension for law enforcement officers and tweaked some of its police reform laws to ease officer concerns. He planned a news conference on Thursday to discuss further ways to improve officer recruitment, including by expanding the state's main police academy to make it more convenient for officers to be certified.

"We are doing things very actively to try to make this a more attractive profession ... but there is no secret that this has been a difficult time for all of us, including law enforcement," Inslee said. "This defund-the-police movement, I don't agree with it. We need to have an approach that will give us an adequate degree of well-trained, accountable police officers, and we are going to do that in Washington state."

The Seattle Police Department remains down 372 officers out of a force approved for more than 1,300. That's hurt emergency response times, prompted the department to stop responding to low-priority calls and required officers to work overtime, hurting morale, according to Chief Adrian Diaz. Mayor Bruce Harrell this month announced a plan to hire 500 officers over the next five years, including signing bonuses of up to \$30,000.

Republicans in Olympia were quick to blame the increase in violent crime and decrease in officers on Democrats' police reform measures, as well as on their response to a state Supreme Court ruling that struck down Washington's prohibition on simple drug possession. Democrats last year made possession of small amounts of drugs, even hard drugs like heroin, a misdemeanor, and they required police to divert a defendant's first two offenses to treatment.

"It is no surprise that this chaos is a direct result of the flawed laws enacted by Democrats over the past two legislative sessions," Sen. Chris Gildon, R-Puyallup, said in a written statement. "Their policies have created an open season for criminal activity."

Despite the increase in violent crime, crime overall was actually down — thanks to a 74% drop in drug arrests and a 79% decrease in identity theft, which fell steeply in 2021 following a rash of pandemic-related unemployment fraud in 2020, the annual report said.

Leslie Cushman, of the Washington Coalition for Police Accountability, disputed the notion that a drop in police staffing would hurt the ability of officers to de-escalate, and she said that departments can rely more on behavioral health agencies for community outreach when necessary.

"Officers have been trained on de-escalation for decades. It is part of their critical decision making for their day-to-day job," she wrote in an email. "It's good to see crime rates down and (I'm) happy that decriminalizing offenses factors in here. That should translate to a freeing up of resources."

Among the other notable findings of the report were that hate crimes increased by about a quarter from 2020, to a total of 592 incidents, including 91 aggravated assaults. Auto thefts were also up by about a quarter, and vehicle part thefts — primarily catalytic converter thefts — doubled.

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HEADLINE	07/20 Utah police body-cam: 4yr-old shot at police
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/video-shows-utah-child-4-shoot-police-outside-mcdonalds-drive-thru
GIST	<p>Utah police have released body-camera footage showing a Feb. 12 incident in which a 4-year-old shot at police officers at a McDonald's drive-thru in Midvale.</p> <p>Officers with the Unified Police Department were responding to reports that a male suspect allegedly brandished a firearm at McDonald's employees due to an incorrect order around 1:30 p.m. local time, and, once officers arrived and began to detain 27-year-old Sadaat Johnson, a child in the backseat of his vehicle fired a gun at the responders.</p> <p>In the body-camera footage from the Unified Police Department released to FOX 13 Salt Lake City, officers can be heard telling two distraught children, ages 3 and 4, in the backseat of Johnson's vehicle, "It's okay," after one of the children fired a single shot.</p> <p>Police initially detained Johnson after they asked him to exit his vehicle and he refused to cooperate, according to a press release from the police department. Footage shows officers forcibly removing the suspect from the driver's seat and handcuffing him on the ground.</p> <p>During that time, an officer noticed a gun pointing from a rear window of Johnson's vehicle, at which point he alerted other officers to the gun and pushed it "to the side as a round was fired," the press release states. He also alerted other officers that it was a "kid" who fired the weapon.</p> <p>A preliminary investigation indicated that the 27-year-old instructed his child to shoot at officers, police said.</p> <p>Court records obtained by FOX 13 revealed that the child shot at officers because "he wanted his daddy back."</p>

	<p>"To have an adult think it is okay to encourage a [4]-year-old to pull a firearm and shoot at police illustrates how out of hand the campaign against police has gotten," Sheriff Rosie Rivera said in a February statement after the incident. "This needs to stop and we need to come together as a community to find solutions to the challenges we face in our neighborhoods. Officers are here to protect and serve and we are beyond belief that something like [this] could happen."</p> <p>Utah authorities charged Johnson with child abuse, aggravated assault and interference with an arresting officer after the incident, according to FOX 13.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Guilty: shooting death retired police captain
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/david-dorn-murder-st-louis-man-found-guilty-death-retired-police-captain-looting
GIST	<p>A Missouri jury found Stephan Cannon, the 26-year-old accused of gunning down retired St. Louis Police Capt. David Dorn during a night of looting and rioting in June 2020, guilty on all counts Wednesday.</p> <p>"Justice has been served," his family told reporters outside the courthouse in videos posted online.</p> <p>The trial had gone to the jury just hours earlier when the defense rested its case.</p> <p>Court records show jurors twice asked the court questions before returning the verdict after just over 3 hours of deliberations.</p> <p>Cannon was charged with first-degree murder, first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary, stealing \$750 or more, unlawful possession of a firearm and three counts of armed criminal action – all felonies.</p> <p>Dorn, 77, was responding to a burglar alarm at a friend's pawn shop when he encountered a group of looters outside.</p> <p>Cannon, the man who prosecutors say shot Dorn dead and left him on the sidewalk, was among a half dozen men charged in connection with the incident.</p> <p>The aftermath was allegedly caught on video that had been shared to Facebook Live and later removed. Prosecutors played it in court.</p> <p>Cannon's public defender Brian Horneyer had argued in his opening remarks that there was no physical evidence linking his client to the killing and said the state's main witness, also charged with a slew of felonies, had told detectives he would say "anything" to get a plea deal and escape a murder conviction.</p> <p>However, prosecutors said Cannon was the only person standing on a nearby corner where the shots came from, when they were fired.</p> <p>After the slaying, investigators reportedly recovered a pistol, televisions and pieces of Cannon's dreadlocks from an apartment where he was staying, but did not locate the handgun that Cannon is believed to have used in the shooting.</p> <p>Cannon's sentencing was set for Sept. 13. He faces life in prison without parole.</p> <p>Dorn had served 38 years in St. Louis' Metropolitan Police Department and six more as chief in Moline Acres.</p> <p>"I'm very glad that justice was served for Capt. Dorn," said Paul Mauro, an attorney and former NYPD inspector who has been closely following the case. "But make no mistake – the conditions that allowed his killing should never have occurred."</p>

	Dorn should have been enjoying his retirement by now, he added.
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HEADLINE	07/20 Uvalde SD recommends firing police chief
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/uvalde-school-district-decide-fire-police-chief-pete/story?id=87127686
GIST	<p>The Uvalde, Texas, school board will meet in a special session Saturday to consider the recommendation to fire Police Chief Pete Arredondo for cause following widespread criticism of how he handled the response to the May school shooting.</p> <p>The Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District has recommended Arredondo be fired.</p> <p>Arredondo is currently on leave while an investigation into the conduct of law enforcement at the shooting on May 24 takes place. Nineteen children and two teachers were killed in one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history.</p> <p>The discussion will occur in a closed session, but, legally, a determination to fire him would have to be publicly announced.</p> <p>Despite the Uvalde school district's active shooter plan calling for its police chief to assume command in the event of a shooting, Arredondo allegedly failed to take on the role of incident commander or transfer the responsibility to another officer on scene during the May 24 attack, according to a report issued this week by a joint committee of the Texas Legislature.</p> <p>"The Uvalde CISD's written active shooter plan directed its police chief to assume command and control the response to an active shooter," according to the report.</p> <p>Last month, Arredondo told The Texas Tribune he did not consider himself the commanding officer on the scene.</p> <p>He also said that no one told him about the 911 calls that came in from students who were still alive in the classrooms during the 77 minutes before law enforcement breached a classroom door and killed the 18-year-old gunman.</p> <p>"We responded to the information that we had and had to adjust to whatever we faced," Arredondo said. "Our objective was to save as many lives as we could, and the extraction of the students from the classrooms by all that were involved saved over 500 of our Uvalde students and teachers before we gained access to the shooter and eliminated the threat."</p> <p>At an open forum hosted by the Uvalde school board Monday, parents and community members called on officials to fire Arredondo immediately, with some also calling for the firing of other members of Uvalde's school district police force who were present during the shooting.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/20 Warning signs before Uvalde shooting
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/uvalde-shooter-exhibited-warning-sign-expert/story?id=87064502
GIST	<p>The Texas House of Representatives committee report on the Robb Elementary School shooting revealed the accused school shooter exhibited many warning signs in the years, months and days leading up to the school shooting, but he was still able to legally purchase the assault rifle used in the shooting.</p> <p>The report illustrated many failures by the school and by law enforcement officers leading up to and on the day of the shooting and caused outcry among families of the 21 people killed in May.</p> <p>Private individuals were the only people who knew of the many warning signs he displayed, as he had no criminal history prior to the shooting. The alleged shooter's apparent motive was a "desire for notoriety and fame," according to the report.</p>

Those interviewed by the committee, including family, friends and acquaintances, reported many warning signs that experts say should have raised red flags.

"He exhibited almost every warning sign," John Cohen, an ABC News contributor and the former acting undersecretary for intelligence and counterterrorism coordinator at the Department of Homeland Security, said in an interview. "This guy should have been on everybody's radar."

School officials had identified the accused shooter as "at-risk" academically by the third grade due to consistently poor test results. However, he did not receive any education services, according to the report.

The shooting itself took place in the accused shooter's former classroom. The suspect had discussed bad memories of fourth grade with an acquaintance just weeks before, according to the report.

The suspect's fourth grade teacher told the committee she was aware he needed special help and that he claimed to be a victim of bullying. She met with his mother over these concerns and said she believed he ultimately had a good year and that the classroom was a safe space where he made friends, according to the report.

The suspect's family, however, disputed this account saying that classmates bullied him over his stutter, clothing and short haircut. Some family members also said that some of the teachers picked on the suspect and his cousin, according to the report. Notes found on the alleged shooter's phone indicated that he was bullied beginning in middle school.

Concerning patterns

Beginning in 2018, the alleged shooter had bad school attendance, with more than 100 absences annually. He also had failing grades and increasingly dismal performance on standardized and end-of-course exams, according to the report.

The committee found that the local court does not regularly enforce truancy rules and it is unclear if any school resource officers ever visited the alleged shooter's home.

Aside from a single 3-day suspension due to a "mutual combat" with a student, the suspect had almost no disciplinary history at school.

By 2021, when he was 17-years-old, the alleged shooter had only completed ninth grade. He was involuntarily withdrawn from Uvalde High School in October 2021, citing poor academic performance and lack of attendance, according to the report.

Last year, the suspect increasingly withdrew and isolated himself. At the beginning of the year, a group of the alleged shooter's former friends "jumped him," according to the report.

His former girlfriend described the alleged shooter as lonely and depressed and said he was constantly teased by friends who called him a "school shooter," according to the report. He was also called a "school shooter" online due to his comments.

She said he told her repeatedly that he wouldn't live past 18, either because he would commit suicide or simply because he "wouldn't live long." The alleged shooter also responded to their breakup last year by harassing the girl and her friends, according to the report.

The alleged shooter's activity online was also concerning as he began to watch violent and gruesome videos and images of things like suicides, beheadings and accidents.

Those with whom he played video games reported that he became enraged when he lost. He allegedly made over-the-top threats, especially towards female players, whom he would terrorize with graphic descriptions of violence and rape.

Later internet usage suggests he may have wondered if he was a sociopath and sought out information on the condition. His internet research resulted in him receiving an email, which was not disclosed from where in the report, about obtaining psychological treatment for sociopathy.

One month into working at Whataburger in 2021, he was fired for threatening a female coworker. He reportedly had a similar experience at Wendy's.

His family and friends were aware of his efforts to buy guns before he was old enough to do so legally. He asked at least two people to buy him guns when he was 17, but they both refused, according to the report.

None of the suspect's online behavior was ever reported to law enforcement, and if it was reported by other users to any social media platform, it does not appear that actions were taken to restrict his access or to report him to authorities as a threat, according to the report.

Red flag laws

Red flag laws, or extreme protection orders, allow law enforcement or family members to ask a civil court to temporarily remove guns from a person who poses a risk to themselves or others. Recent federal legislation included funding for states to implement these laws.

While Texas is not one of the 19 states that have [red flag laws in place](#), experts say these laws could have prevented the shooting if they had been used in this case.

"I think this is an illustration of why red flag laws might be needed. And that might be helpful, particularly if they were used extensively here," said Jeffrey Swanson, a professor of psychology and behavioral studies who is affiliated with the Center for Firearms Law at Duke University, told ABC News in an interview.

The alleged shooter in Uvalde showed sufficient indication of risks that his guns could have been removed under these laws, Swanson said.

Jarrold Burguan, the former San Bernardino police chief and ABC News contributor, said the mental health system being a revolving door has not made it effective in forcing treatment and potentially protecting society from these kinds of attacks.

While law enforcement can detain people they suspect pose a potential risk for up to 72 hours (this varies based on state), Burguan said millions of people slip through the cracks.

"We need something that puts more teeth in the ability of the mental health system to hold somebody and force them into treatment, and stop allowing people to walk away, and then affect everybody else in society," Burguan said.

Cohen said he has heard this concern from law enforcement all over the country but says the recent federal legislation can be helpful by increasing access to mental health care.

Cohen sees a need to also implement threat management strategies where community members, leaders and family could put in place a plan that would help people who may pose a risk.

Even if there is not enough evidence to arrest someone who may pose a risk, there is still middle ground for acting preventatively with "law enforcement working with mental health professionals to assess the risk based on an evaluation of the person's behavior," Cohen said.

Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.

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